

**Statewide Study of Feedback on  
Implementation of Key Illinois Education Initiatives**

**Final Report**

**July 2015**

Prepared for

**Implementation Review Committee of the Illinois P-20 Council**

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# **Statewide Study of Feedback on Implementation of Key Illinois Education Initiatives**

## **Final Report**

**July 2015**

## **BACKGROUND**

### **Purpose**

This study was commissioned by the Implementation Review Committee (Committee) of the Illinois P-20 Council. A report on the findings and themes of this study was provided to the Implementation Review Committee to serve as the basis for their recommendations to the Illinois P-20 Council. This report also will also be provided to the full P-20 Council.

### **Illinois P-20 Council**

The Illinois P-20 Council was established in 2009 for the purpose of bringing together stakeholders to support a high quality education and system of supports from birth through postsecondary and into the workforce. The Council is appointed by the Governor and includes a diverse cross-section of stakeholders including educators, administrators, parents, advocates, researchers, and employers from across the P-20 spectrum. The Council serves as an advisory body to state policymakers, making recommendations to the Governor, General Assembly, and state agencies on strengthening the education system and advancing the Council's goal of increasing the proportion of residents with a degree or workforce credential to 60% by 2025.

### **Policy Landscape**

Over the past six years, Illinois has adopted a number new policies aimed transforming the education system and better aligning efforts to support student success across the P-20 system. A primary goal of these initiatives has been to strengthen teaching and learning in order to better prepare students for success in college and careers.

Adopted reforms have included, among other initiatives, the implementation of:

- Rigorous, internationally benchmarked student learning standards
- Standards-based student assessment
- Redesigned educator performance evaluation system
- P-20 longitudinal education data system

### **Committee Charge**

The committees of the P-20 Council provide a mechanism for the Council to engage a broader set of stakeholders on a variety of substantive areas impacting the education system. The

Implementation Review Committee of the Illinois P-20 Council was formed in the fall of 2013. The charge of the committee is as follows:

*“The P-20 Implementation Review Committee is charged with reviewing the implementation of key Illinois education initiatives, establishing a process to solicit stakeholder input into the review, identifying challenges to implementation, and offering suggestions to enhance implementation and continued improvement of education in Illinois. The committee chairs will coordinate with the Chair of the P-20 Council, the Joint Education Leadership Committee and the Coordinating Committee to plan the review. The committee will issue an annual report describing its activities, major findings and recommendations.*

*The co-chairs of the P-20 Implementation Review Committee will develop a work plan in consultation with the Chair of the P-20 Council. The plan will be submitted for review and feedback at a meeting of the full P-20 Council.”*

### **Committee Composition**

The Committee distribution list included more than 80 teachers, parents, administrators, researchers, education advocates, school board members, and state policymakers from across Illinois.

### **Committee Meetings**

Between fall 2013 and summer 2015, the Committee convened eight times in addition to interim telecommunication. Committee meetings were conducted via video conference at the offices of the Illinois Federation for Teachers (IFT) in Westmont, Springfield, and Fairview Heights to provide stakeholders throughout the state the opportunity to participate. In addition to these in-person video locations, meetings also included a call-in option.

## **INTRODUCTION**

### **Selection of Work Priorities**

The Committee began its work by identifying statewide education initiatives on which they were interested in gathering feedback about implementation. Initially, the Committee identified 29 initiatives spanning from early childhood to postsecondary education.<sup>1</sup>

After compiling a comprehensive set of initiatives to the Committee, the Committee then conducted multiple internal surveys in an iterative process to identify priority work areas. A set of guiding principles was developed by the Committee to serve as a framework for prioritizing initiatives. Based on these criteria, the Committee rank ordered initiatives to be included in the study.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Full list of original initiative included in the Appendix.

<sup>2</sup> Full list of original initiative included in Appendix.



## Guiding Principles

- **Focus** – Work priorities should be P-20 in nature with implications for the full spectrum of education from birth through higher education.
- **Context**
  - Work of other advisory groups should be taken into consideration and duplicative efforts should be avoided.
  - Selected areas should be those in which the Committee has the most potential to inform implementation through leveraging the work of other related groups or to fill a gap in the feedback loop.
- **Interest** – Selected work areas should resonate for the majority of the group and be considered priority topics.
- **Scope**
  - Work areas should be clearly defined.
  - Scope of work within each priority area should be feasible based on the capacity and resources of Committee (staff support, time commitment of members, etc.)
- **Timeliness** – Based on the associated timelines, selected initiatives should be those at a point in their development/roll-out that is “most ripe” for incorporating recommendations on implementation.

To better understand background on each of the initiatives and the status of their implementation, the Committee developed a context document, which served as a review of other studies and work by advisory bodies related to the priority topic areas. This landscape scan helped narrow the list of initiatives even further as well. As a part of the landscape review, the Committee coordinated with the Data, Assessment, and Accountability (DAA) Committee of the P-20 Council to avoid duplication of efforts. The DAA Committee had conducted an assessments survey previously but did not gather feedback from the some stakeholder groups identified as priority audiences for the Implementation Review Committee.

For each of the top-ranked initiatives, the context document included information on relevant legislation, related timelines, previous studies and evaluation projects, associated advisory groups, and the current status of implementation.

After consideration of the guiding principles and the information included in the context document, the Committee selected the following initiatives as work priorities:

- 1) Student learning standards
- 2) Statewide student assessments
- 3) Collection and use of student and educator data
- 4) Educator performance evaluations

Statewide student assessments and the Partnership for the Assessment of College and Career Readiness (PARCC) assessment in particular were identified as a priority initiative by the

Committee during the work area selection process. Statewide implementation of the PARCC assessment took place during the 2014-15 school year. It is important to note that the work of the Committee preceded the statewide administration of the assessment. PARCC testing had not taken place at the time of the survey and was in progress at the time that most focus groups were being conducted.

As the state worked with districts to prepare for statewide administration of the new computer based assessment, the Committee felt it was important to provide stakeholders an opportunity to provide feedback on their understanding of the assessment and their experience with preparation.

### **Target Stakeholder Groups**

The Committee also specified which stakeholder groups from which they were interested in gathering feedback.

- Administrators
- Business Community
- Community Members
- Parents
- Teachers

### **SURVEY DEVELOPMENT**

Data were collected through mixed methods, including an online survey as well as in-person and teleconference focus groups.

#### **Survey Protocol**

Following the identification of priority issue areas, a set of survey questions was developed based on Committee discussions and feedback from the P-20 Council. Questions on each of four initiatives were included in the survey. The survey included multiple choice questions, yes or no questions, as well as open-ended response items. Specific data points including comparisons across stakeholder groups and deidentified quotes from open-ended responses are included in the body of this report.

All survey participants received the same core set of questions. The survey was developed using a branching technique so each participant was taken to a customized suite of questions for each topic area depending on the stakeholder type he/she identified himself/herself as at the beginning of the survey. Participants were required to select a single stakeholder type at the start of the survey.

The survey protocol was approved by the Institutional Review Board of the University of Illinois.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> Survey protocol is attached in the Appendix.

## **FOCUS GROUP ORGANIZATION**

As a follow up to the survey, the Committee chose to conduct focus groups to solicit more detailed qualitative feedback from parents, community members, administrators, teachers, and business representatives from across the state.

Focus groups lasted between 90 minutes and 2 hours and were uncompensated other than the provision of food and refreshments for in-person sessions. The number of participants per sessions was limited in order to allow all participants a reasonable opportunity to participate. Focus groups were conducted by stakeholder group to help ensure participants were comfortable providing open and honest feedback.

### **Focus Group Protocol**

The focus group protocol was reviewed and approved by the University of Illinois Institutional Review Board.<sup>4</sup> Sessions were conducted from the same basic protocol but some questions were tailored to the stakeholder group to make them as accessible and relevant as possible. Follow up questions varied depending on the nature of the conversation.

### **Consent and Confidentiality**

All participants were briefed on the confidentiality policy and were informed of their rights as participants in human subjects research prior to participation. All participants gave verbal consent to participate in the focus group and to be recorded prior to participation. Sessions were audio recorded and transcribed. Deidentified quotes from focus group participants are included in the body of this report.

### **Target Stakeholder Groups**

In order to ensure that feedback was as authentic and candid as possible, focus groups were held by stakeholder type. For example, teachers participated in groups with other teachers, parents with other parents, etc.

- Administrators
- Business Community
- Community Members
- Parents
- Teachers

### **Recruitment and Selection of Participants**

The survey was available online and participation was open to the public. The survey link was distributed to the P-20 Council, the Committee, and a variety of organizations with members across the state in order to encourage as broad of participation as possible based on target

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<sup>4</sup> Focus group protocol is available in the Appendix.

stakeholder groups identified for feedback by the Committee. Partner organizations were encouraged to share with the link to the survey with their networks. Groups invited to share the link with their constituencies included:

African American Family Commission	IL Principals Association
IL Association of School Boards	IL PTA
IL Business Round Table	Latino Family Commission
IL Education Association	Latino Policy Forum
IL Federation of Teachers	

For focus groups, targeted outreach was conducted to solicit feedback from priority stakeholder groups identified by the Committee, specifically those that were underrepresented in the survey respondents. Stakeholder groups with disproportionately low levels of participation in the survey included parents, community members, business representatives as well as African Americans and Latinos generally. In addition to having low levels of participation in the survey, parents and community members were less likely to have had other opportunities to provide feedback on the four initiatives included in the study according to the landscape review conducted at the beginning of the Committee's work. As a result, outreach to parents, community members, and African American and Latino parents and community members, in particular, was prioritized.

In an effort to connect with potential participants for focus groups, the opportunity to participate was promoted through several means. Registration for focus groups was available online and was open to participation from the general public. The registration link was distributed as widely as possible and survey participants who provided an email were invited to participate in focus groups. Registration and promotional materials including flyers and template emails were made available in English and Spanish. Participants also were able to register on-site for in-person focus groups which were organized in coordination with community based organizations.

In order to help reach priority stakeholder groups and target demographics, the Committee invited several organizations to share the registration link with their networks including:

African American Family Commission	Latino Family Commission
Black Star Project	Latino Policy Forum
Brighton Park Neighborhood Council	Local community foundations
Generations Serving Generations	Local collective impact networks
IL Association of School Boards	Local parent advisory councils (PACs)
IL Education Association	Local PTAs
IL Federation for Teachers	Logan Square Neighborhood Association
IL P-20 Council	Members of Illinois Workforce Investment Board
IL PTA	
Implementation Review Committee of the IL P-20 Council	

## **RECOGNITION OF LIMITATIONS**

Illinois is one of the largest and most diverse states in the nation. In order to ensure that as many participants as possible were reached, the survey was made available online and left open for six weeks. Additionally, focus group registration was available online and focus groups were conducted both in person and via teleconference. However, in spite of best efforts, there were some barriers to participation and limitations to this study which are acknowledged below.

### **Primary Affiliation**

Participants were asked to identify a primary stakeholder affiliation. Participants were only able to select one affiliation. A participant may fall into multiple categories of stakeholder types, making it difficult to select a primary identification. For example, a participant may be a parent and business owner or a community member and a teacher. Participants were asked to select a primary affiliation and to respond from their perspective in that role as much as possible to allow data to be disaggregated and analyzed more easily for the most meaningful trends.

### **Qualitative Data**

Focus groups and open-ended survey questions provide an opportunity to gather more detailed feedback about the experience and perspective of participants. However, those who completed open-ended questions and participated in focus groups represent only a portion of study participants. This qualitative information is important in helping to better understand the survey data but is not generalizable to all participants.

### **Scope and Timeline**

More than 2700 teachers, parents, administrators, community members, and business representatives participated in the Committee's survey. Additionally, 13 focus groups were held providing 70 participants with the opportunity to share their perspectives and experiences on these critical policy issues facing the state. However, there are many others who were not able to participate due to scheduling constraints and the timeline associated with project reporting.

The broad scope of the project allowed for robust data collection and dynamic analysis. However, the timeline for the delivery of this report dictated that data analysis be prioritized to reflect the direction and purpose of the Committee.

### **Self-Selection Bias**

Registration was open to all who wished to participate and the link to registration was shared widely through a diverse range of groups. Participants self-registered online or in person at focus groups organized in partnership with community based organizations and statewide associations. Through either means, participants may have been more engaged on topics related to education policy discussions than an average residents by virtue of the process used for outreach and recruitment.

### **Target Stakeholders**

Five stakeholder groups were identified by the Committee for inclusion in the study. Some target groups were oversampled during the focus group process to reflect the priorities of the Committee.

Parents and community members were determined to be priority groups. These groups were selected for multiple reasons. First, parents and community members were underrepresented in the earlier survey. Secondly, these two groups traditionally have had fewer opportunities to provide input to policymakers via advisory groups, evaluation studies, and other mechanisms for gathering feedback on implementation.<sup>5</sup>

During focus groups, some participants suggested that a similar opportunity for students to provide feedback be made available. Students were not identified by the Committee as a target stakeholder group for the purposes of this project and were therefore not included in the survey or focus groups.

### **Web Access**

In order to reach as many prospective respondents as possible, the survey was conducted online. While the internet is widely available, access is not universal and therefore web-based participation may have presented a barrier to some potential participants.

Registration for focus groups was conducted online and much outreach was done via email. Recognizing internet access as a potential challenge for some potential participants, the Committee also worked with partner organizations to help identify participants for community based focus groups. Participants who participated in in-person focus groups held in community based settings were able to register on site. Call-in focus groups were held as well. The use of both community based options and call-in options was intentional to make participation as convenient and accessible as possible for prospective participants.

### **DATA COLLECTION**

Data collection took place in two phases, a web-based survey followed by both in-person and call-in focus groups.

All survey respondents were asked the same core set of questions including a suite of demographic questions. Demographic questions included questions age, race, gender, occupation, zip code, years of education, and stakeholder type. Survey protocols were differentiated by stakeholder type to ensure questions were relevant and phrased appropriately. This technique is known as branching. Which branch of the survey a stakeholder received depended on what stakeholder type the respondent identified as his or her primary stakeholder affiliation. Selecting a primary affiliation was the only required question on the survey.

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<sup>5</sup> As determined by landscape review conducted by Committee staff at the beginning of this project.

The survey protocol included a mix of question formats. Questions on a five-point scale (Strongly Disagree, Disagree, Neutral, Agree, Strongly Agree) were the most common. However, yes and no questions were also included as well as open-ended response items. The survey was organized by initiative and questions on each of the four priority initiatives were included in the survey. All participants regardless of stakeholder type was asked questions about each of the four initiatives as a part of the survey.

A cover letter from Committee Co-chairs explaining the purpose of the survey and the intended use for the data was included at the front of the survey. The cover letter was shared as an attachment to email invitations to potential survey participants. The survey was open to the public for participation.

At the end of the survey, respondents were given the opportunity to provide their email address. They were made aware that sharing an email would allow them to be contacted for opportunities to participate in focus groups as well as other project updates.

## PARTICIPANT DEMOGRAPHICS

### Summary of Survey Respondent Demographics

The survey was available online for roughly six weeks from November 24, 2014 – January 5, 2015. Survey closed with 2705 respondents representing a diverse cross-section of stakeholders from across the state. Selected demographic data for respondents is below.<sup>6</sup>

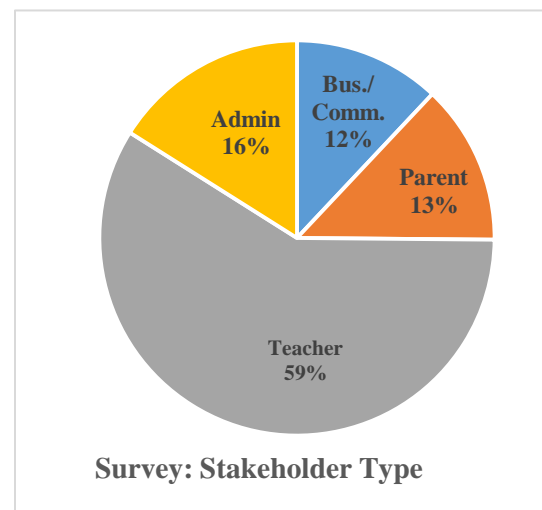
#### Gender

Respondents were more likely to be female than male with 64% identifying themselves as female. Males represented 29% of survey respondents and roughly 6% of participants provided no response. The gender imbalance may be due to the large number of educators who participated since the education workforce is predominantly female.

**Figure 1: Survey Participants' Stakeholder Type**

#### Stakeholder Type

All respondents were required to select a primary stakeholder affiliation. Respondents chose one of the following: teacher, administrator, parent, community member, or business representative. While respondents from each stakeholder type participated in the survey, roughly 60% of all survey respondents were teachers. Because of the small number of Business Representatives and the similarities in responses, Business Representatives and Community Members were consolidated for portions of survey data analysis.



<sup>6</sup> Tables outlining all areas for which demographic information was collected are included in the Appendix.

The disproportionate response from teachers likely shaped some of the other characteristics of respondents including race and gender.

### Geography

Respondents were asked to provide their county. Counties were divided into 5 regions:<sup>7</sup>

- Cook County
- Collar Counties
- Northern Counties (outside of Cook County and Collar Counties)
- Middle Counties
- Southern Counties

The geographic spread of survey respondents is largely representative of the population distribution of the state (see Table 1 below).

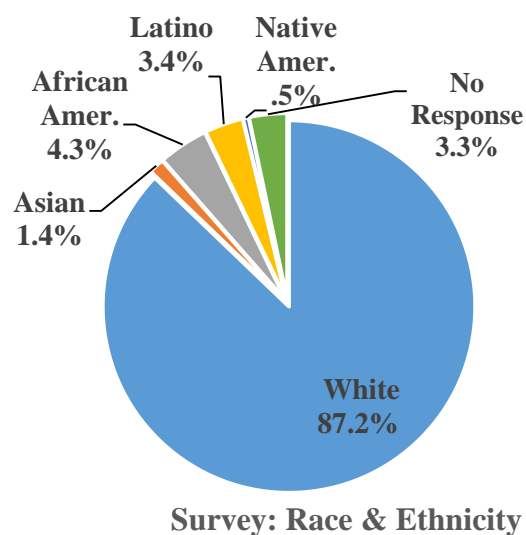
**Table 1: Survey Participants by Region**

Region	N	Sample %	State %
Cook County	747	27.6	40.6
Collar counties	589	21.8	22.0
Northern counties <sup>8</sup>	402	14.9	12.9
Middle counties	489	18.1	15.2
Southern counties	251	9.3	9.3
Missing/no response	227	8.4	NA
Total	2705	100.0	100.0

### Race

A majority of respondents identified themselves as Caucasian/White (see Figure 2). Other racial and ethnic groups were disproportionately underrepresented among survey respondents. The lack of racial and ethnic diversity may be a product of the large proportion of teachers who participated in the survey, as Illinois' educator workforce is predominantly White.

**Figure 2: Race/Ethnicity of Survey Participants**



<sup>7</sup> A list of which counties were included in each region is available in the Appendix.

<sup>8</sup> Northern Counties are counties in the upper third of the state excluding Cook County and Collar Counties. A list of the counties in each region is included in the Appendix.



### Summary of Focus Group Participant Demographics

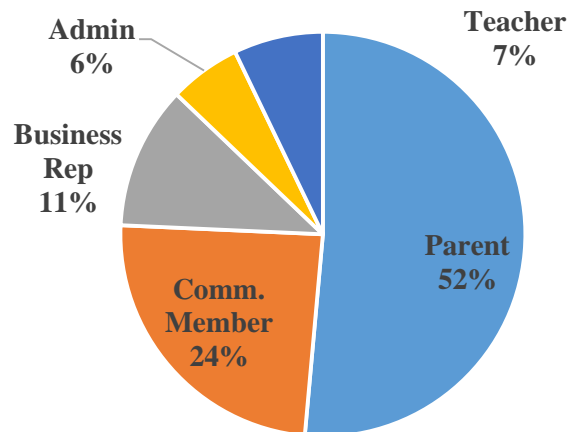
Thirteen focus groups were held during roughly 6 weeks between April 21 – June 4, 2015. These groups included 70 participants from across the state. Selected demographic data for respondents are below.<sup>9</sup>

#### Gender

Sixty-nine percent of focus group participants were identified themselves as female. Twenty-seven percent identified themselves as male, and four percent did not respond.

#### Stakeholder Type

Focus groups were held with all stakeholder groups. A larger number of focus groups were held with parents and community members who were identified as priority stakeholder groups (see Figure 3).



Focus Groups: Stakeholder Groups

Figure 3: Focus Group Stakeholder Types

#### Geography

Respondents were asked to provide their county. Counties were divided into 5 regions:<sup>10</sup>

- Cook
- Collar Counties
- Northern Counties
- Middle Counties
- Southern Counties

Targeted outreach was done to engage African American and Latino parents and community members. As a result, a concentration of participants was located in the city of Chicago which in part accounts for the large number of participants from Cook County.

<sup>9</sup> Tables outlining all areas for which demographic information was collected are included in the Appendix.

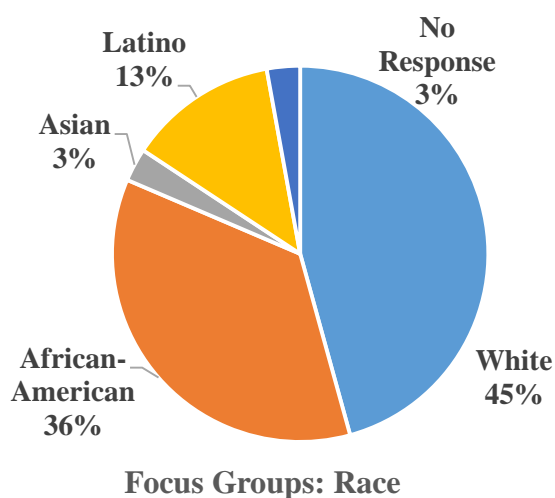
<sup>10</sup> A list of which counties were included in each region is available in the Appendix.

**Table 2: Focus Group Participants by Region**

Region	N	Sample %	State %
Cook County	43	61.4	40.6
Collar counties	5	7.14	22.0
Northern counties	2	2.9	12.9
Middle counties	18	25.7	15.2
Southern counties	2	2.9	9.3
Total	70	100.0	100.0

**Race**

Focus group participants represented a more racially diverse sample than survey respondents (see Figure 4 below). Targeted outreach was conducted to African Americans and Latinos who were disproportionately underrepresented among survey participants. Table 3 below reflects the successful oversampling of African-American and Latino parents and community groups.

**Figure 4: Race/Ethnicity of Focus Group Participants****Table 3: Survey and Focus Group Race/Ethnicity Compared to the State**

Race/Ethnicity	Survey %	Focus Group %	State %
African American/Black	4.3	35.6	15
Asian	1.4	2.9	5
Latino	3.4	12.8	15
Caucasian/White	87.2	45.7	64
Other	0.5	NA	1
No response/missing	3.3	2.9	NA
<b>Total</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>

## **DATA ANALYSIS AND FINDINGS**

Data were collected and analyzed from both the survey and focus groups. The findings and themes of this analysis are integrated under this section to reflect key points from the study. Given the large volume of data collected, information included under this section reflects common themes, unique findings, and action oriented takeaways.

Both quantitative and qualitative data is included throughout the body of the report. Quantitative survey data served as the primary basis for most themes and findings. Qualitative data was sourced from both open-ended survey responses and focus group sessions. These statements are included for illustrative purposes. Statistical analysis of both quantitative and qualitative data is available in the Appendix.

Because teachers made up such a large proportion of respondents, significance testing of survey responses was conducted to understand difference in responses by stakeholder type.<sup>11</sup> Some of these significant differences in responses and feedback are noted throughout they report. More detailed information on the analysis is included in the Appendix.

### **Study Findings & Themes**

Outlined below is a set of findings and themes along with associated data points from the study which includes key takeaways from both the survey and focus groups. The findings are organized by themes within each initiative.

### **Student Learning Standards**

In June 2010, the Illinois State Board of Education (ISBE) adopted new learning standards (ILS) for Mathematics and English Language Arts. In February 2014, the Board adopted new Science standards as well. The Illinois Learning Standards (ILS) define what skills and knowledge students in Illinois public should be equipped with in the seven areas as a result of their elementary and secondary education. The new, more rigorous standards are internationally benchmarked and aligned to postsecondary and workforce readiness expectations in the 21<sup>st</sup> century economy.

### **Familiarity with Standards**

One of the key things that the Committee was interested in assessing was how familiar stakeholders were with the ILS. When asked if they were familiar with key shifts in standards and expectations for students, a majority of survey respondents across stakeholder groups either agreed or strongly agreed. Administrators reported the highest levels of familiarity.

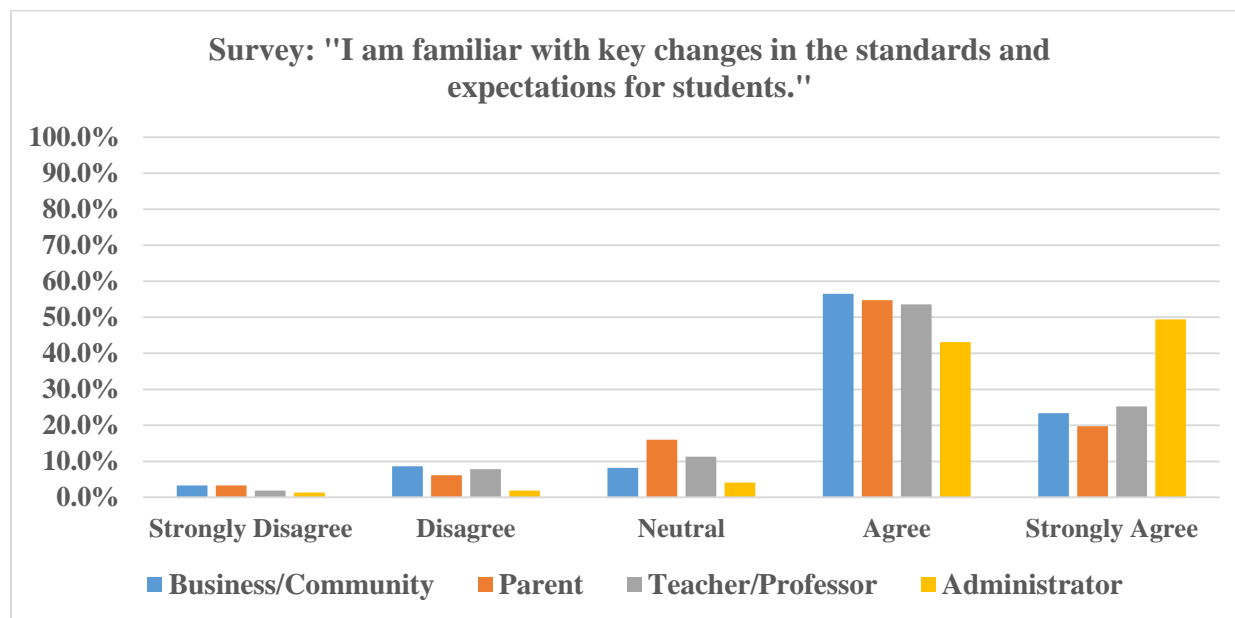
- At least 55% of survey participants across all stakeholder groups reported high levels<sup>12</sup> of familiarity with the purpose of the standards.

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<sup>11</sup> Significance testing analysis is available in the Appendix.

<sup>12</sup> At least 55% of each stakeholder group agreed or strongly agreed.

- At least 60% of survey participants across all stakeholder groups reported high levels<sup>13</sup> of familiarity with changes in instruction associated with the standards.
- At least 55% of survey participants across all stakeholder groups reported high levels of familiarity with key changes in the standards and student expectations.<sup>14</sup>

**Figure 5: Stakeholder Familiarity with Illinois Learning Standards**

### Challenges to Implementation

When asked about the primary challenges to the implementation of the ILS, stakeholders cited a variety of concerns (see Appendix). Top challenges identified by teachers and administrators were:

- Sufficient planning time – 74% administrators, 77% teachers
  - *“Allowing the proper amount of time to distribute and educate on the standards...”* – Administrator
- Professional development – 69% administrators, 67% teachers
  - *“Getting enough high quality professional development and support to teachers.”* – Administrator
  - *“I have not had enough professional development but have spent considerable time unpacking them and do see the value and need for more rigorous standards.”* – Teacher

<sup>13</sup> At least 60% of each stakeholder group agreed or strongly agreed.

<sup>14</sup> At least 55% of each stakeholder group agreed or strongly agreed.

- Lack of time due to multiple initiatives – 67% administrators, 60% teachers
  - *“too many initiatives implemented at the same time; difficult to do the implementation well” – Administrator*

Guidance on new standards (Administrators 36%, Teachers 52%) and financial resources (Administrators 65%, Teachers 53%) were other common concerns. A number of open-ended responses also included mention the need for high quality, well-aligned resources and materials to support instruction and learning.

- *“Our current curriculum don't align with the standards, yet we are expected to implement them.” – Teacher*
- *“Need of materials in classrooms and the school in general that have a relation with the implementation of the Illinois standards.” – Teacher*
- *“Lack of identified aligned resources.” – Administrator*

Compared to other grade levels (see below), pre-school teachers (9%) were least likely to report understanding of the standards as being one of the biggest challenges associated with the implementation of the Illinois Learning Standards.

- Elementary – 31%
- Middle – 32%
- High School – 36%
- College/University – 28%

In open-ended survey response items, parents identified the following as being among the challenges to implementation of the standards:

- Differentiated learning and the flexibility to meet the needs of diverse learners including gifted students, English Language Learners, and special needs students
  - *“Keeping gifted students engaged.” – Parent*
  - *“difficult for students with ESL [English as a Second Language]” – Parent*
  - *“Lack of communication about how standards apply to Special Education students and what they need to be taught. Confusion with what a student should know based on his disability and what they are expected to know due to grade level/age.” – Teacher*
- Need for additional professional development to help prepare teachers for implementing new standards
  - *“Teachers having the ability and professional development to connect and teach.” – Parent*

- *“Teachers have not been given enough (if any) support/resources in order to implement standards.” – Parent*
- Parent engagement and communication
  - *“The parents do not understand how to help their children with the math work that is coming home from school.” – Parent*
  - *“No assistance for Parents.” – Parent*

### **Family Engagement & Communications**

Nearly half of parents who responded to the survey reported knowing how to access resources to support student learning and mastery of the standards. However, during focus group discussions and in open-ended survey responses, several parents referenced being unfamiliar with strategies associated with homework and struggling to support students with assignments at home particularly in math.

- *“As a parent it is sometimes difficult to help my student with her homework, as it is not how I learned the skills.” – Parent*
- *“No at-home support for students. Parents are against it because they don't understand it and are not able to assist their children.” – Parent*
- *“Very confusing homework.” – Parent*

The frequency and type communication between schools and families on what students are learning varies widely.

- The most effective ways to reach parents according to parents participating in focus groups were: face to face, email, text alerts, school website, and online portals.
- The least effective ways to reach parents according to parents participating in focus groups were: hard copy newsletters, flyers, and other hard copy communications which do not consistently make it home from school.

The importance of family engagement as a key component in student success was raised during focus groups and in open-ended responses. In open-ended survey responses, several examples of ways schools have worked to reach out to parents and the community about changes in what students are learning with respect to the new standards were shared including printed materials (brochures, flyers, booklets), online resources (presentations, newsletters), social media, in-person meetings and informational events (community forum, parent nights). Gaps and the need for additional outreach and discussion with parents and community were also acknowledged.

Participants in focus groups across stakeholder groups stressed the importance of families and educators working together to better support students and improve their learning.

- *“Engaging parents and all the social-economic family units to support the changes and help their children succeed.” – Parent*
- *“They did STEM workshops, the parents had opportunities to go to STEM workshops and then, there’s one where we went to a convention where they taught about the STEM programs.” – Parent*

### **Preparing Students for College and Careers**

More than 65% of survey participants across all stakeholder groups generally agreed that it is important that student learning standards are aligned to the skills and knowledge needed for success in college and careers.<sup>15</sup> During focus groups, participants often indicated a belief that they felt that what students were learning in school more closely aligned to college readiness than to workforce readiness.

Administrators (68%) agreed that standards will prepare students for success in careers. There was less agreement among business/community (44%), teachers (34%), and parents (29%). During focus groups, some parents, teachers, and community members commented on a perception of a reduced number of vocational opportunities being available to students today as compared to when they went to school. Vocational and technical education offerings were valued as being important for helping to prepare students for jobs.

### **Social Emotional Development and Life Skills**

At least half of all participants across stakeholder groups indicated that it was important that the Illinois Learning Standards built on the Illinois Social Emotional Development Standards.<sup>16</sup>

Business representatives, community members, and parents in focus groups spoke about the need for students to develop “life skills” such as interpersonal skills, organizational skills, and timeliness. Some parents and community members in focus groups defined “life skills” more broadly to include topics such as financial literacy and health.

- *“They need to bring the home economics back into the school. Because when we were in high school, we have home economics and shop and all that. They need to bring all that back. Some kids need to know how to count money. Because some kids, they don’t even know how to count money. ” – Parent*
- *“Everybody doesn’t need to go to college. Children need to learn entrepreneurial skills.” – Parent*
- *“They were talking about their inability to get skilled workers because of the fact that there used to be a time when in high school students had vocational options available*

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<sup>15</sup> Question was on a five point scale (Strongly Agree, Agree, Neutral, Disagree, Strongly Disagree). ”. At least 65% of each stakeholder group “Agreed” and “Strongly Agreed”.

<sup>16</sup> Question was on a five point scale (Strongly Agree, Agree, Neutral, Disagree, Strongly Disagree). At least 50% of each stakeholder group “Agreed” and “Strongly Agreed”.

*to them, but fewer and fewer programs are being offered at the high school level.” – Community Member*

- *“I don’t think soft skills [life skills] captures their importance. It is essential that people show up on time. It is essential that people are properly attired for the work environment; that they understand how to work as a team and how to resolve conflicts. Those have actually become more of a sticking point for employers than the actual hard skills.” – Business member*

### **Use of Technology to Support Learning**

The use of technology in classrooms to support student learning varies widely based on feedback provided in focus groups. While a question related to this topic was not included in the survey, during focus groups, feedback included comments related to students having access to netbooks, schools allowing personal devices, and schools not having sufficient internet access.

- *“I think that even though they’re learning a lot about technology, I think that a lot of our schools in the community are behind a lot because I’ve travelled to different other schools and what I notice is that they have tablets, they have laptops, they have computers.” – Parent*
- *“They use Google Classroom, so their assignments can be done online that way or they can download the worksheets if they need it.” – Parent*
- *“And they have a laptop program at my daughter’s high school. So, everybody has a laptop that they need to bring every day.” – Parent*

### **Value of Common Standards**

During focus groups, parents and community members shared stories of high mobility and spoke about the difficulty they experienced transitioning into a new school in other states. The Illinois Learning Standards are Common Core aligned in English Language Arts and Math but cover a number of topics outside of these areas as well. The transition for high mobility students could be eased by the implementation of shared standards across states. This topic was not included on the survey so a corresponding data point is not available.

### **Statewide Student Assessments<sup>17</sup>**

Per the Committee’s direction, survey questions largely focused on the PARCC assessment. However, ACT, WorkKeys, and testing more broadly were included.

Illinois is a member of the Partnership for the Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers (PARCC) Consortium, a coalition of states developing and implementing a student assessment system aligned to the knowledge and skills needed in college and the workforce. PARCC is a computer-based student assessment taking the place of the Illinois Student Achievement Test

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<sup>17</sup> PARCC had only been field tested at the time of the survey and the inaugural year of testing was in progress during most focus groups. Information on participation of study participants in field testing is not available.



(ISAT). The PARCC assessment includes modifications and accommodations for students with special needs as well as English Learners.

A subset of Illinois schools participated in the field test of the new assessment during spring 2014 to help identify any logistical and technical issues. The PARCC assessment was administered statewide in the 2014-15 school year.

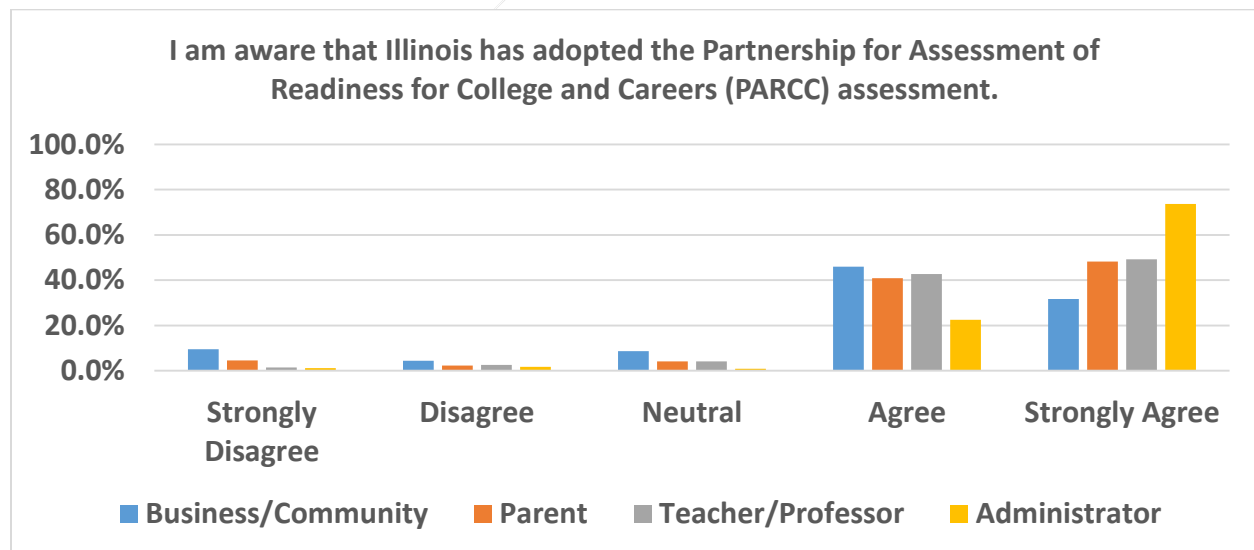
The survey was conducted between November 2014 and January 2015. At that time, the PARCC assessment had not only been field tested in a limited number of districts and had not been administered statewide. Focus groups were conducted between April 2015 and June 2015. The first year of PARCC testing was underway and had not completed at the time of the focus groups.

While the PARCC assessment was at a different point in implementation than other initiatives included in the study, as the state prepared for the rollout of a new initiative, the Committee wanted to provide stakeholders an opportunity to share the experience and understanding leading up statewide administration.

### Familiarity with Assessments

Survey respondents across stakeholder groups indicated that they were aware that Illinois had adopted the Partnership for Assessment of Readiness of College and Careers (PARCC) assessment. Administrators (96%), teachers (92%), parents (89%) reported the highest levels of being aware that Illinois had adopted a new assessment. However, awareness of the adoption of the new assessment was high across all groups with a majority of community members (79%) and the business community (61%) reporting that they were aware of the new assessment as well.<sup>18</sup>

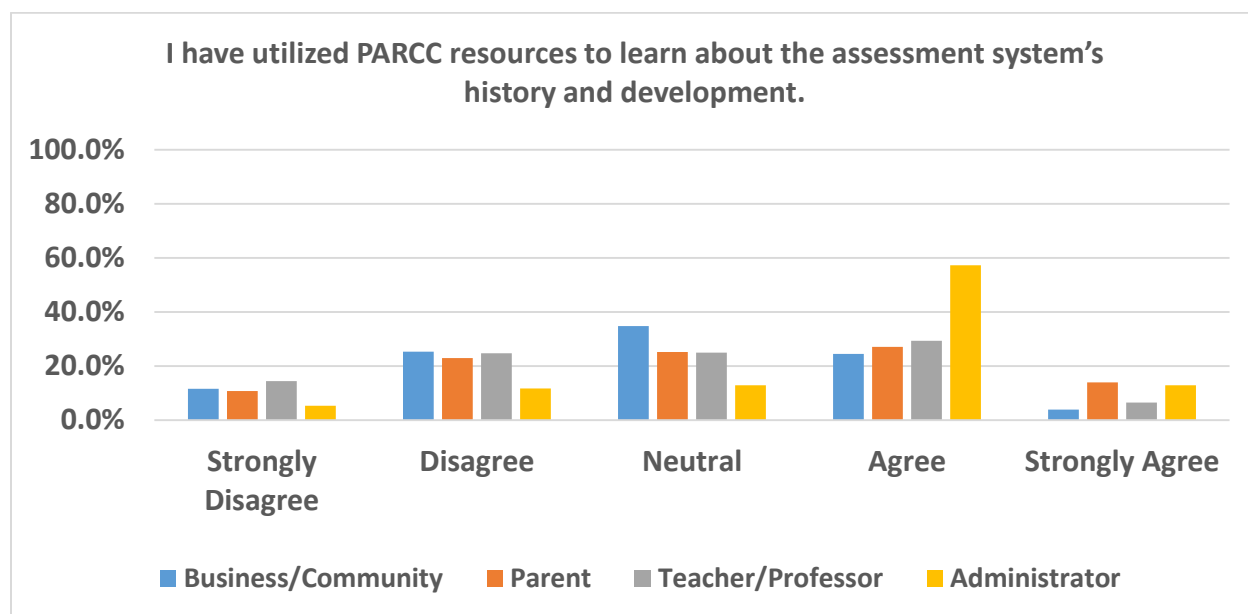
**Figure 6: Stakeholder Familiarity with PARCC**



<sup>18</sup> Question was on a five point scale (Strongly Agree, Agree, Neutral, Disagree, Strongly Disagree). Percentages reflect responses “Agree” and “Strongly Agree”.

Administrators (70%) reported highest levels of having utilized PARCC resources to learn about the assessment system’s history and development. Teachers (36%), parents (41%), business representatives (50%), and community members (27%) reported lower levels of use of PARCC resources to learn about the assessment system’s history and development (see Figure 7).<sup>19</sup>

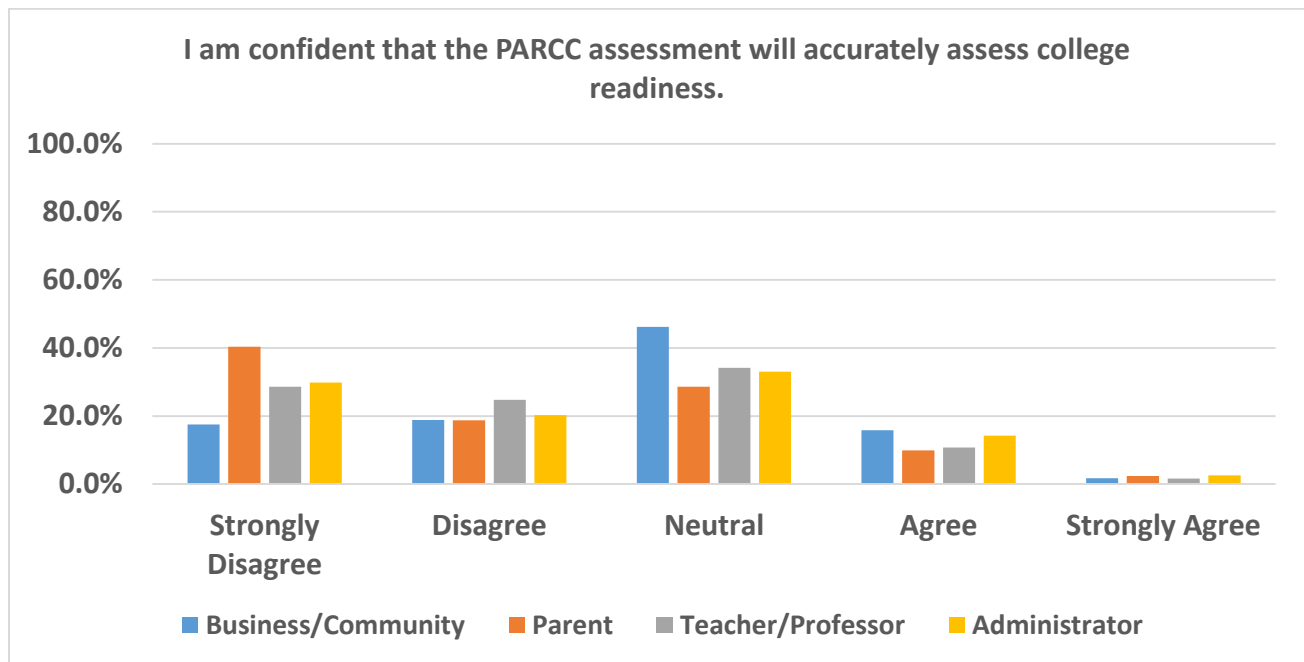
**Figure 7: Stakeholder Utilization of PARCC**



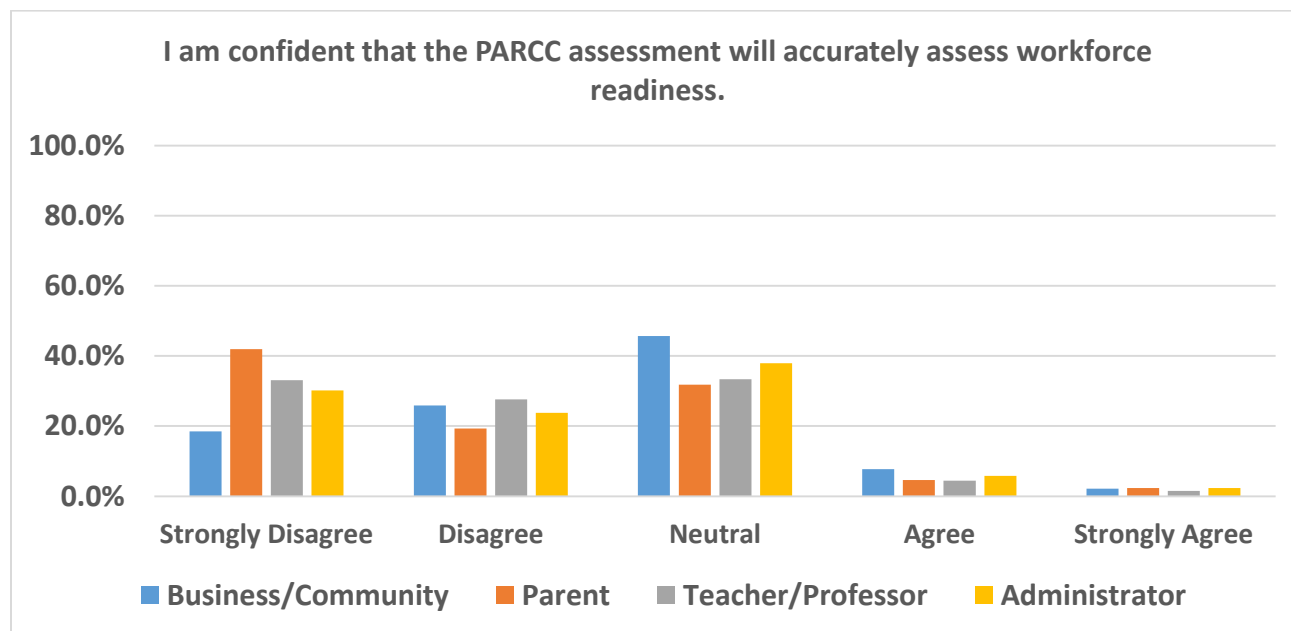
### Assessing College and Career Readiness

Prior to the administration of the new assessment, stakeholders across groups were largely unable to say that they agreed that they were confident that PARCC would accurately assess college readiness. When asked about confidence in PARCC’s ability to accurately assess college readiness, roughly 1/3 of stakeholders across most groups reported being neutral (Administrators 33%, Business/Community 46%, Parents 29%, Teachers 34%).

<sup>19</sup> Question was on a five point scale (Strongly Agree, Agree, Neutral, Disagree, Strongly Disagree). Percentages reflect responses “Agree” and “Strongly Agree”.

**Figure 8: Stakeholder Confidence That PARCC Will Accurately Assess College Readiness**

Confidence among survey respondents in PARCC's ability to assess college readiness was higher than confidence among survey respondents in PARCC's ability to assess career readiness. When asked about confidence in PARCC's ability to accurately assess college readiness, at least 1/3 of stakeholders across all groups reported being neutral (Administrators 38%, Business/Community 46%, Parents 32%, Teachers 33%). Prior to statewide administration of the assessment, most were unable to say that they agreed that they were confident that PARCC's would accurately assess workforce readiness.

**Figure 9: Stakeholder Confidence That PARCC Will Accurately Assess Workforce Readiness**

Comments from open-ended survey response items and focus groups related to the ability of PARCC to assess college and workforce readiness varied and included:

- It is too soon to tell whether or not PARCC is a reliable and/or accurate indicator of college and career readiness.<sup>20</sup>
  - “Aside from the four issues I mentioned above, I’ve been fairly pleased with the ability of PARCC to test a student’s ability to think and reason. When all the bugs are worked out and the timing is changed, I think it will be a successful test.” – Parent
  - “Need to see data to understand the impact of all changes.” – Parent
  - “Too early to tell. You will need at least 3-4 years of data and follow up to see [if] students progress /decline.” – Parent
- Postsecondary and workforce readiness is too complex and dynamic of a set of skills, knowledge, attitudes, and experiences to be able to be measured by a test.
  - “Passing a test does not equal job readiness. Interpersonal skills, critical thinking, and a myriad of other skills better assess workforce readiness.” – Parent
- Students’ fluency with the testing platform or general computer savvy could skew test results.

<sup>20</sup> PARCC assessment had not yet been administered statewide at the time of the survey.

## Assessing Student Growth

Prior to the administration of the new assessment, stakeholders across groups were not able to say they were confident that PARCC would accurately assess student growth. Only a small number of respondents across stakeholder groups agreed (Administrators 16%, Business Representatives 20%, Community Members 21%, Parents – 13%, Teachers – 10%) that students had been exposed to the new Illinois Learning Standards long enough to begin being tested based on those standards.<sup>21</sup> At the time of the survey, a majority of respondents indicated that the new ILS had been in place in their districts for 2 years or longer.

- *“Again, more time is needed to transition teachers, students, and families to these new standards before the assessment will be accurate.” – Parent*
- *“Not enough time with CCSS (Common Core State Standards) to use the test for college readiness.” – Parent*

Comments during focus groups and in open-ended survey responses related to the ability of PARCC to assess student growth varied and included:

- It was too soon to determine whether or not the assessment is a reliable and/or accurate indicator of student growth.<sup>22</sup>
- Concerns related to the length of time students has been exposed to new standards<sup>23</sup>
- Limitations of standardized tests and the need for multiple ways of measuring student learning and growth.
- Students’ fluency with the platform or computer savvy could interfere with test performance.
- Factors outside the classroom could impact student test performance.

## Computer-Based Assessments

Many focus group participants commented that from a young age students are increasingly comfortable with computers and technology, and therefore were accepting of the transition to computer-based assessment.

- *“They’re doing a lot of technology. So they’re doing a lot of stuff on the computer, as far as math and the STEM program. Even the Pre-K.” – Parent*

<sup>21</sup> ILS were first adopted by the Illinois State Board of Education in 2010. Districts have been in the ongoing process of implementing the new standards since this time. Different districts are at different points in the transition.

<sup>22</sup> PARCC assessment had not yet been administered statewide at the time of the survey.

<sup>23</sup> Illinois Learning Standards were adopted in 2010.

- *“These phones, these computers, everybody loves them. I think that will be a good thing.” – Parent*

Comments shared during focus groups and in open-ended survey response items related to the transition to computer based assessments were varied and included:

- Variation in technological capacity of schools and access to sufficient number of devices
- Low income students potentially having limited experience with computers as compared to their peers; and therefore different levels of keyboarding ability, familiarity with basic computer functions and commands, etc.
- Developmental appropriateness of devices and platform for younger students<sup>24</sup>
- Students having limited experience with computers outside of touch screen technology
- Challenges and difficulties for students with special needs and English Language Learners

### **Diverse Learners**

Administrators reported the highest level of familiarity with modifications and accommodations for special education students<sup>25</sup> and English Language Learners<sup>26</sup> with more than half indicating they were familiar. Fewer than half of parents and teachers considered themselves to be familiar with modifications and accommodations for special education students<sup>27</sup> or English Language Learners<sup>28</sup>.

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<sup>24</sup> PARCC summative assessment is administered beginning in 3<sup>rd</sup> grade.

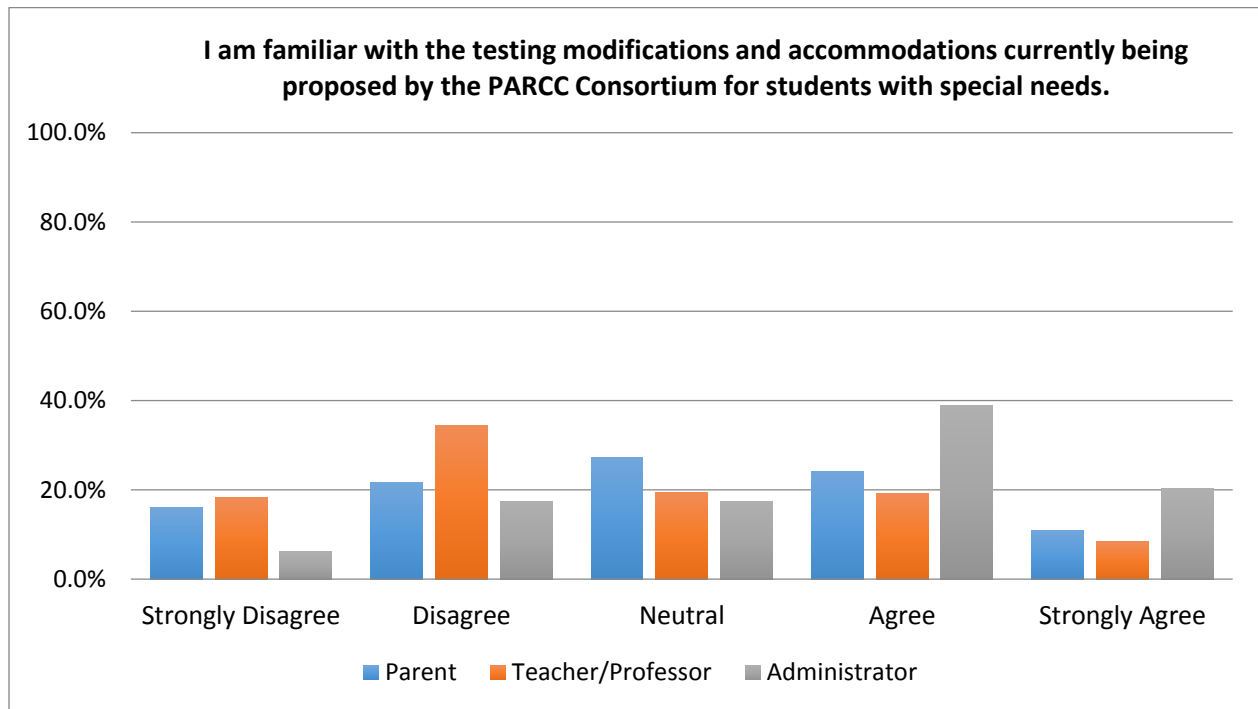
<sup>25</sup> 59% Agree or Strongly Agree

<sup>26</sup> 57% Agree or Strongly Agree

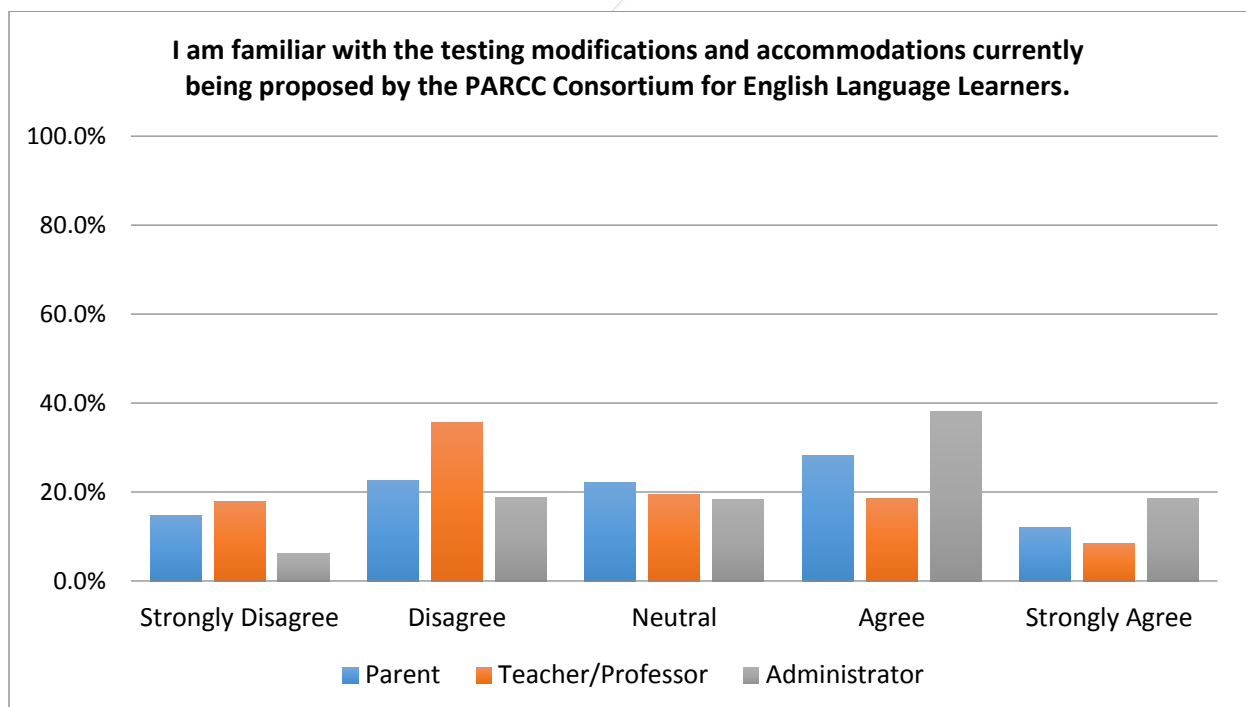
<sup>27</sup> 27% of Teachers reporting Agree or Strongly Agree, 35% of Parents reporting Agree or Strongly Agree

<sup>28</sup> 28% of Teachers reporting Agree or Strongly Agree, 40% of Parents reporting Agree or Strongly Agree

**Figure 10: Stakeholder Familiarity with PARCC Testing Modifications and Accommodations for English Language Learners**



**Figure 11: Stakeholder Familiarity with PARCC Testing Modifications and Accommodations for Students with Special Needs**



A majority of survey respondents across stakeholder types reported being neutral when asked if modifications and accommodations for special education<sup>29</sup> and English Language Learners<sup>30</sup> were sufficient. However, many reported disagreeing with the statement for both special education<sup>31</sup> and English Language Learners.<sup>32</sup>

In focus groups, those who taught or were the parent or guardian of a special education student or English Learner tended to be more familiar with modifications and accommodations for their student. Type of needs discussed during focus groups and open-ended responses varied too widely among participants to be able to report common takeaways about experiences and perceptions of sufficiency of modifications and accommodations.

Parents and community members in focus group commented on the importance of ensuring that test items were culturally relevant and appropriate so that they easily understood and relatable for all students.

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<sup>29</sup> 60% Teachers reporting Neutral, 54% Parents reporting Neutral, 51% of Administrators reporting Neutral

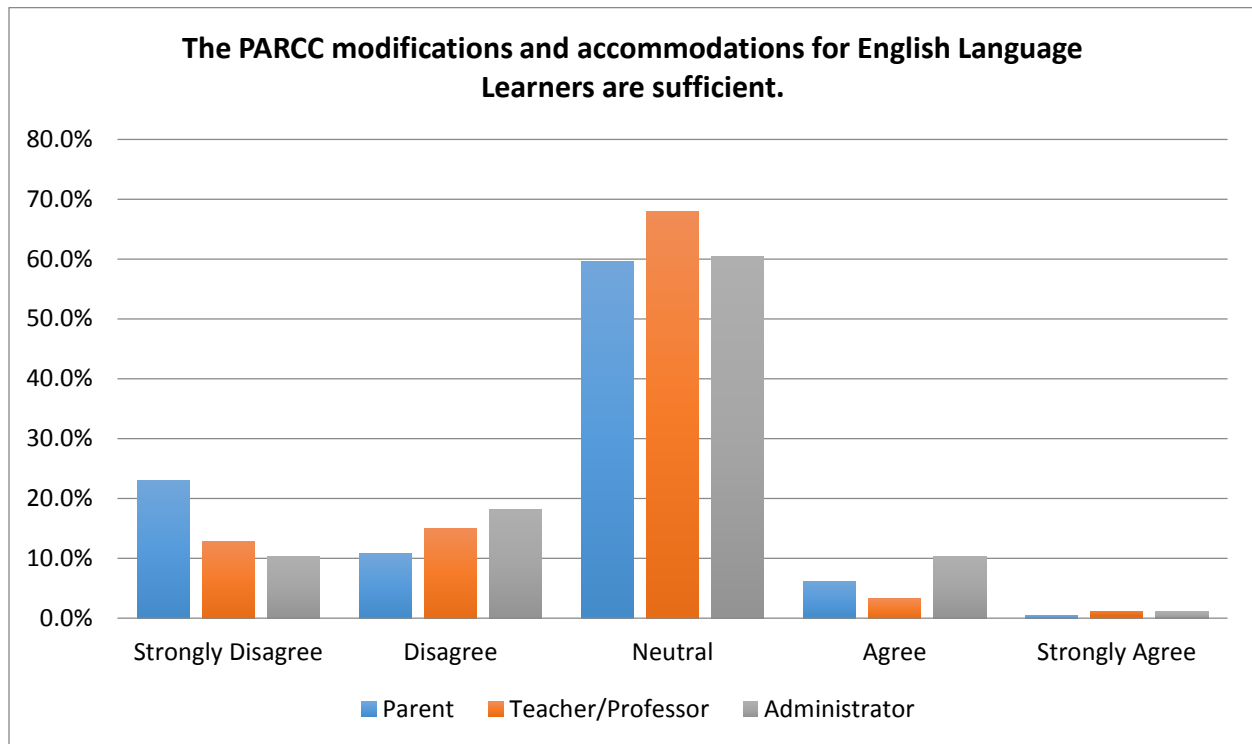
<sup>30</sup> 68% Teachers reporting Neutral, 60% Parents reporting Neutral, 60% of Administrators reporting Neutral

<sup>31</sup> 36% of Teachers reporting Disagree or Strongly Disagree, 35% of Parents reporting Disagree or Strongly Disagree, 30% of Administrators reporting Disagree or Strongly Disagree

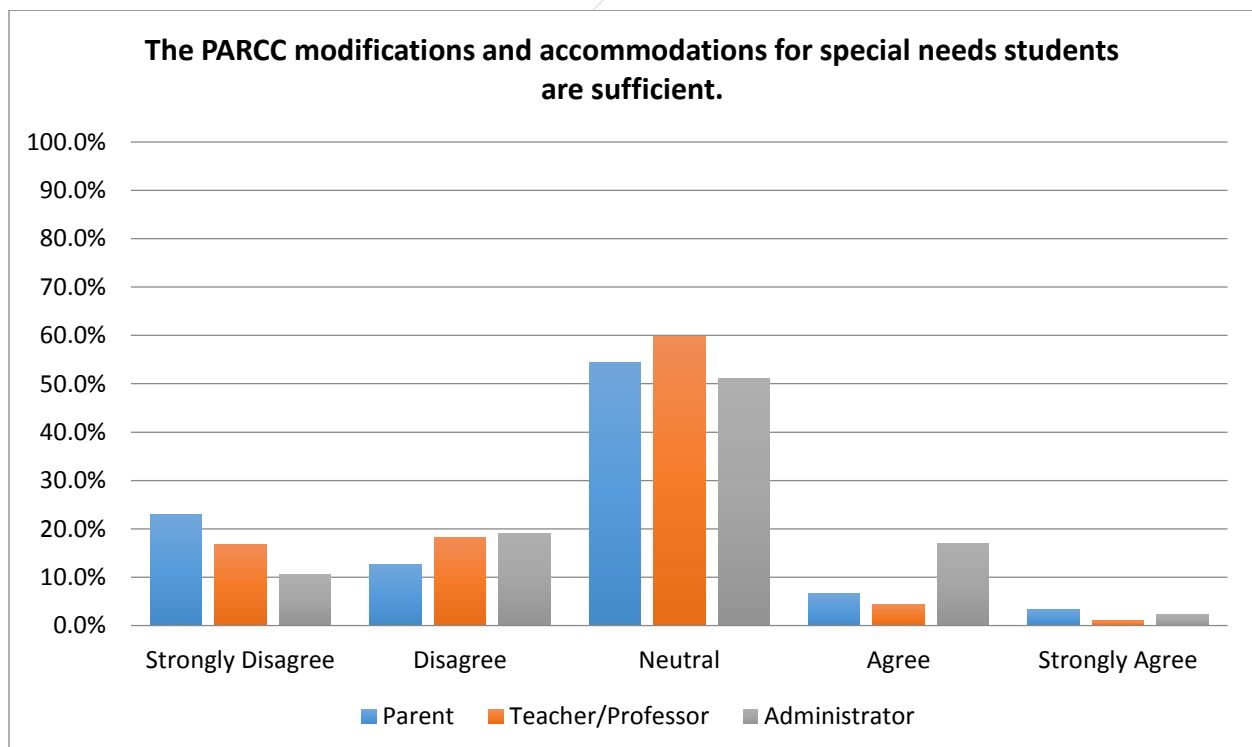
<sup>32</sup> 28% of Teachers reporting Disagree or Strongly Disagree, 34% of Parents reporting Disagree or Strongly Disagree, 28% of Administrators reporting Disagree or Strongly Disagree



**Figure 12: Stakeholder Agreement That PARCC Testing Modifications and Accommodations for English Language Learners Are Sufficient**



**Figure 13: Stakeholder Agreement That PARCC Testing Modifications and Accommodations for Students with Special Needs Are Sufficient**



### Utility of Test Data

In focus groups and on open-ended survey responses, feedback indicated that standardized test data would be more useful if test results were received more quickly after completing assessments. Teachers reported that the delay makes it difficult to use the information to inform planning, interventions, and instruction. The PARCC assessment is computer-based as opposed to the previous state assessment, the Illinois Student Achievement Test (ISAT), which was administered in hard copy. Transitioning to a computer-based assessment is expected to enable data to be processed and turned around more quickly, enhancing its utility to support planning and practice. However, data was not available following the test in this year because it was the first year the test was administered statewide.

During focus groups, teachers and parents shared that they currently tend to rely more on homework, quarterly grades, grade point averages, and teacher developed assessments than standardized tests to understand student learning and development. However, some parents did indicate that standardized tests help them to understand how their student is performing relative to their peers and whether or not he or she was “on-track”.

### Testing Time

Because PARCC had not been administered statewide at the time of the survey, questions related to testing time were not included in the survey. However, in open-ended responses, some comments were made related to the balance of instructional time and assessment time. Since PARCC was not yet in place, these comments are likely concerns related to standardized testing more broadly.

During focus groups, the PARCC assessment was in its first round of statewide administration. Some teachers and parents in focus groups commented that that they were concerned with the amount of testing and the amount of testing time and test preparation.

- *“I feel like three is a little bit excessive... I mean, I realize that it a checkpoint to make sure they’re learning what they’re supposed to be learning but I also don’t know how I feel with how standardized tests are delivered.” – Parent*
- *“I mean, it’s really long days. She tested for four days in a row. That’s all they did at school so it was just exhausting.” – Parent*
- *“You know, to lose 6 weeks out of the school year to do standardized testing for the benefit of the district seems excessive.” – Parent*

During the course of the focus groups, PARCC announced a number of updates for the next year including a reduced number of items which is expected to reduce testing time which may help to address concerns shared related to testing time. Also, while PARCC is administered statewide, many districts also administer locally developed assessments in addition to the state’s large scale student assessments. As a result, the amount of testing time varies widely by district.

Moreover, the Assessment Review Task Force was established with the passage of Public Act 98-1075. The Task Force has been charged with reviewing various aspects of standardized tests

including the amount of time spent on assessments. The Task Force is expected to provide its next report in fall 2015.

### Test Stress

Because PARCC had not been administered at the time of the survey, questions related to student anxiety associated with the test were not included in the survey. As a part of focus group discussion, educators, community members, and parents expressed mixed sentiments regarding student anxiety around new assessment. Some indicated that they felt that the new assessment had caused unnecessary stress for students but others felt students were accustomed to standardized tests and were not especially impacted by the change in assessment.

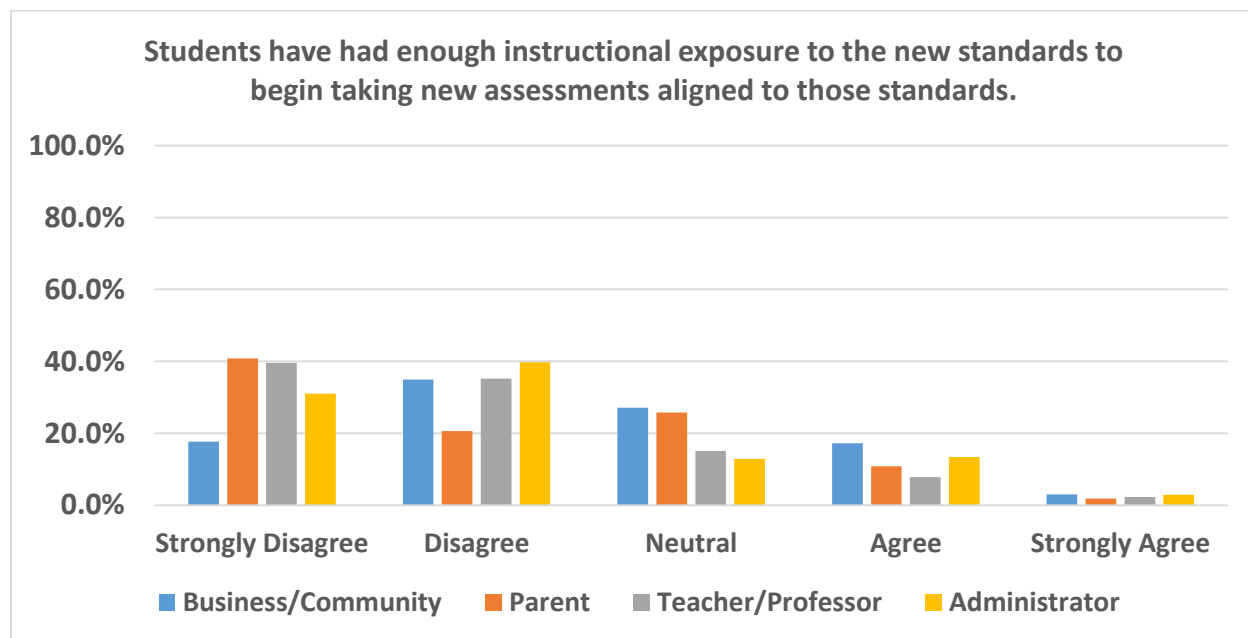
- *“One thing that I notice that’s different from ISAT testing was that ISATS were so stressful for our youngest where it—and I think the teacher would put pressure on them and I noticed that after March, it was kind of like, “we’re done learning”. Where with PARCC, he wasn’t nervous. He wasn’t anxious. He slept fine. It didn’t seem to disrupt his normal functioning school day and maybe it is because we’re not testing all day, we’re just going to do these couple hours.” – Parent*
- *“I think it’s because a lot of pressure is being put on the teachers and the school system to look good ...” – Parent*
- *“I think one of those big issues with testing is that a lot of kids are intimidated and now that it’s like so many tests, you know. It’s just like too much, too soon, too fast and they get intimidated and so they don’t do as well.” – Parent*

### Timing and Transition

A majority of participants reported that the Illinois Learning Standards had been in place in their district for at least 2 years.<sup>33</sup> However, only a small number of survey participants across stakeholder groups (Administrators 16%, Business Representatives 21%, Community Members 20%, Parents 13%, and Teachers 10%) agreed that students had been exposed to new standards long enough to begin being tested on them.<sup>34</sup>

<sup>33</sup> ILS were first adopted by the Illinois State Board of Education in 2010. Districts have been in the ongoing process of implementing the new standards since this time. Different districts are at different points in the transition.

<sup>34</sup> Question was on a five point scale (Strongly Agree, Agree, Neutral, Disagree, Strongly Disagree). Percentages reflect responses “Agree” and “Strongly Agree”.

**Figure 14: Stakeholder Agreement That Students Have Had Sufficient Exposure to New Standards**

Concerns were shared during focus groups and in open-ended survey responses regarding the amount of time teachers and schools have had to prepare for the administration of a new assessment.

- “not enough time to prepare, students have learning gaps due to the changes” – Administrator
- “I do not feel that students have had enough time to experience the new standards and there are ‘gaps’ in their learning because of the jump in curriculum demands on students.” – Administrator

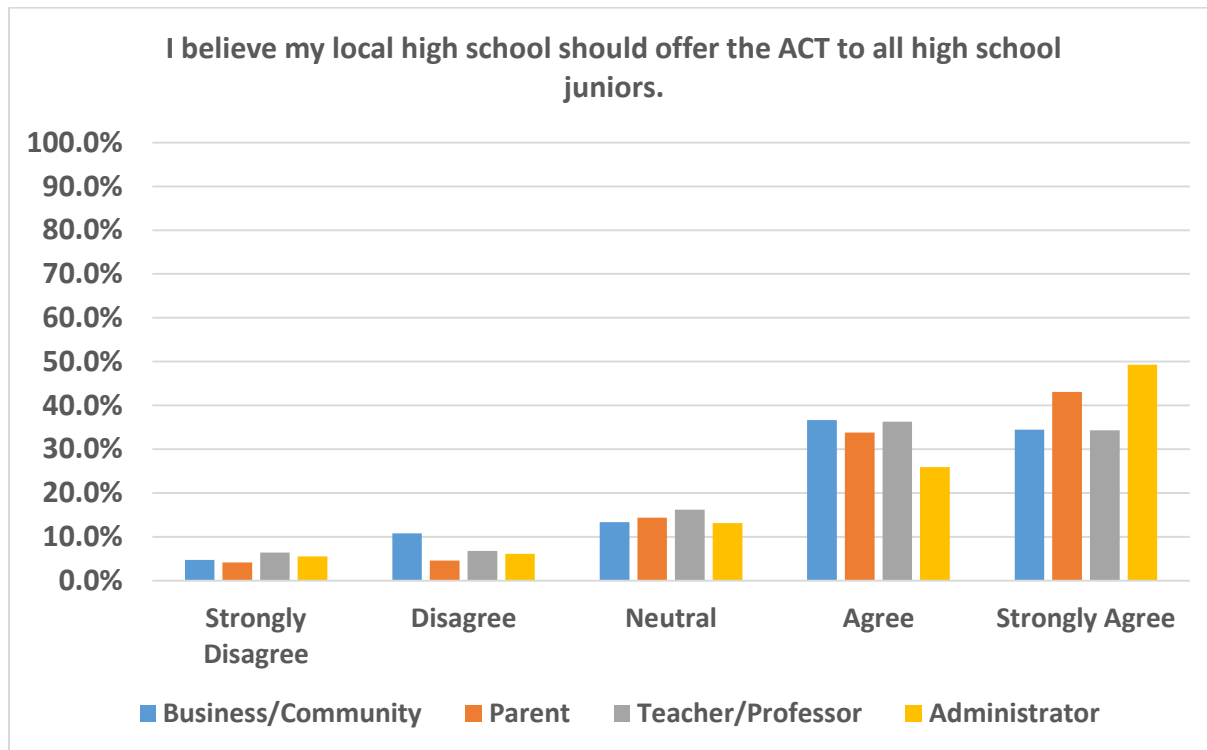
### ACT

A majority of survey respondents across stakeholder groups agreed that local high schools should offer the ACT to all high school juniors.<sup>35</sup>

- “I strongly support the ACT and WorkKeys assessments and feel they should still be required; not optional.” – Administrator

<sup>35</sup> Question was on a five point scale (Strongly Agree, Agree, Neutral, Disagree, Strongly Disagree). Percentages reflect responses “Agree” and “Strongly Agree”.

**Figure 15: Stakeholder Agreement That Their Local High School Should Offer the ACT to All High School Juniors**

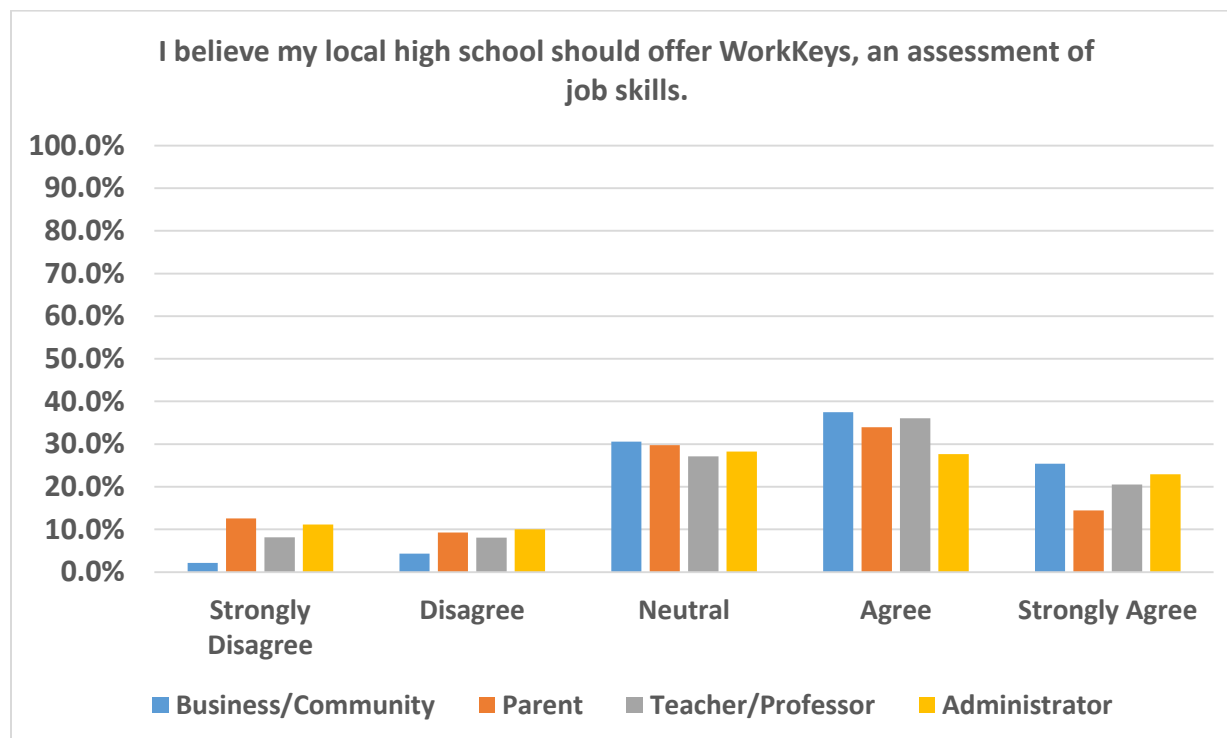


### WorkKeys

Survey respondents across most stakeholders groups were supportive of the use of WorkKeys, an assessment of job skills. When asked if they believed local high schools should offer WorkKeys, survey respondents across stakeholder groups reported “Agree” or “Strongly Agree” at the following levels (Administrators 50%, Business 79%, Community 61%, Parents 48%, and Teachers 57%).<sup>36</sup>

<sup>36</sup> Question was on a five point scale (Strongly Agree, Agree, Neutral, Disagree, Strongly Disagree). Percentages reflect responses “Agree” and “Strongly Agree”.

**Figure 16: Stakeholder Agreement That Their Local High School Should Offer WorkKeys, an Assessment of Job Skills**



Business focus group participants all commented that they would like for high school students to be able to get certifications and take other tests. They commented:

- “You have the opportunity in the educational environment to give these high school students a recognizable credential or certification along with their high school diploma. That certification can be in manufacturing, in being a CNA, in being in IT. ... That would be of great value to employers. ” – Business Representative

### **Educator Performance Evaluations**

In 2010, Illinois signed into law the Performance Evaluation Reform Act (PERA), redesigning teacher and administrator performance evaluations. Districts began phasing in new evaluation systems in fall 2012, and by fall 2016, all districts are to have a new system in place. Under the new system, evaluators must be trained to conduct evaluations and school districts must develop evaluations that take into account students’ progress among the performance measures.

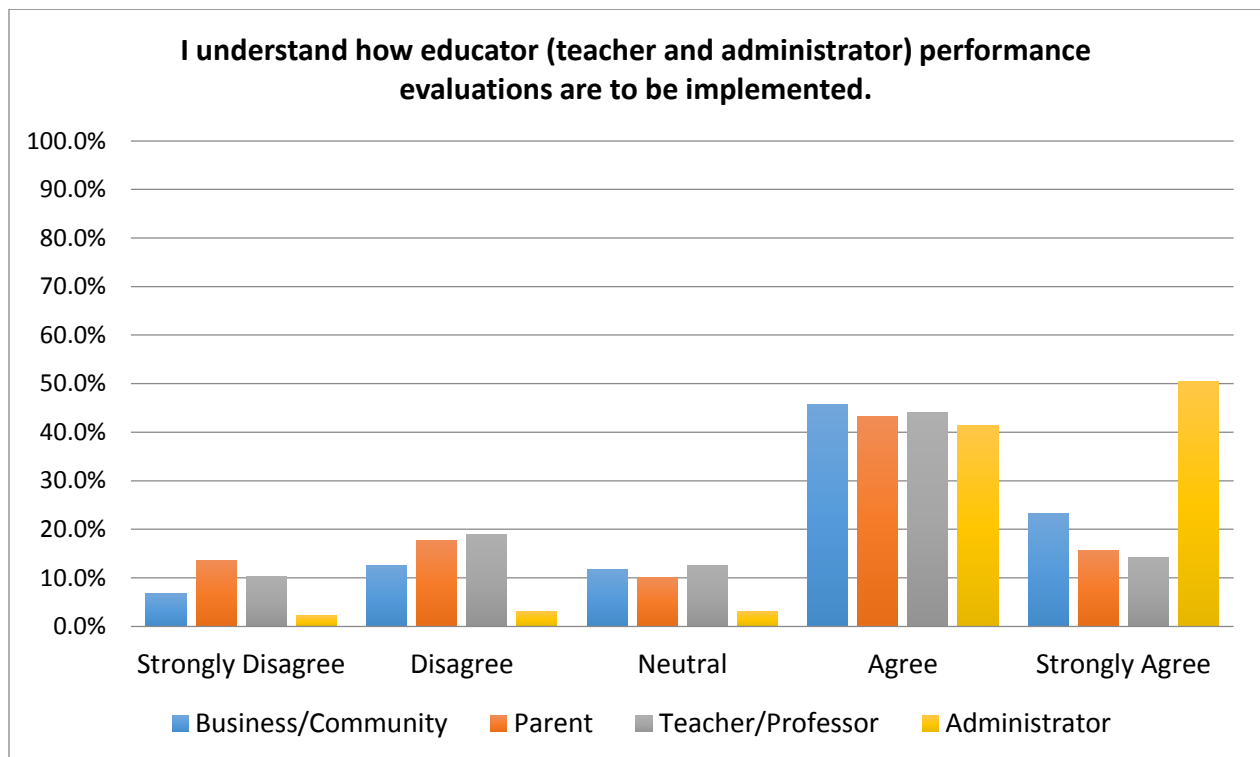
The Illinois State Board of Education is working in coordination with the Performance Evaluation Advisory Council (PEAC) which consists of stakeholders to advise the agency on the development and implementation of the new educator performance evaluation system and associated supports.

### Familiarity

Survey participants across stakeholder groups reported a high level of understanding of how teacher and administrator performance evaluations are to be implemented (Administrators 92%, Business Members 61%, Community Members 70%, Parents 59%, and Teachers 58%).<sup>37</sup>

A majority of teachers (56%) and administrators (86%) who participated in the survey reported having received guidance on the implementation of educator performance evaluation at high levels.<sup>38</sup>

**Figure 17: Stakeholder Understanding of How Educator Performance Evaluations Are to Be Implemented**



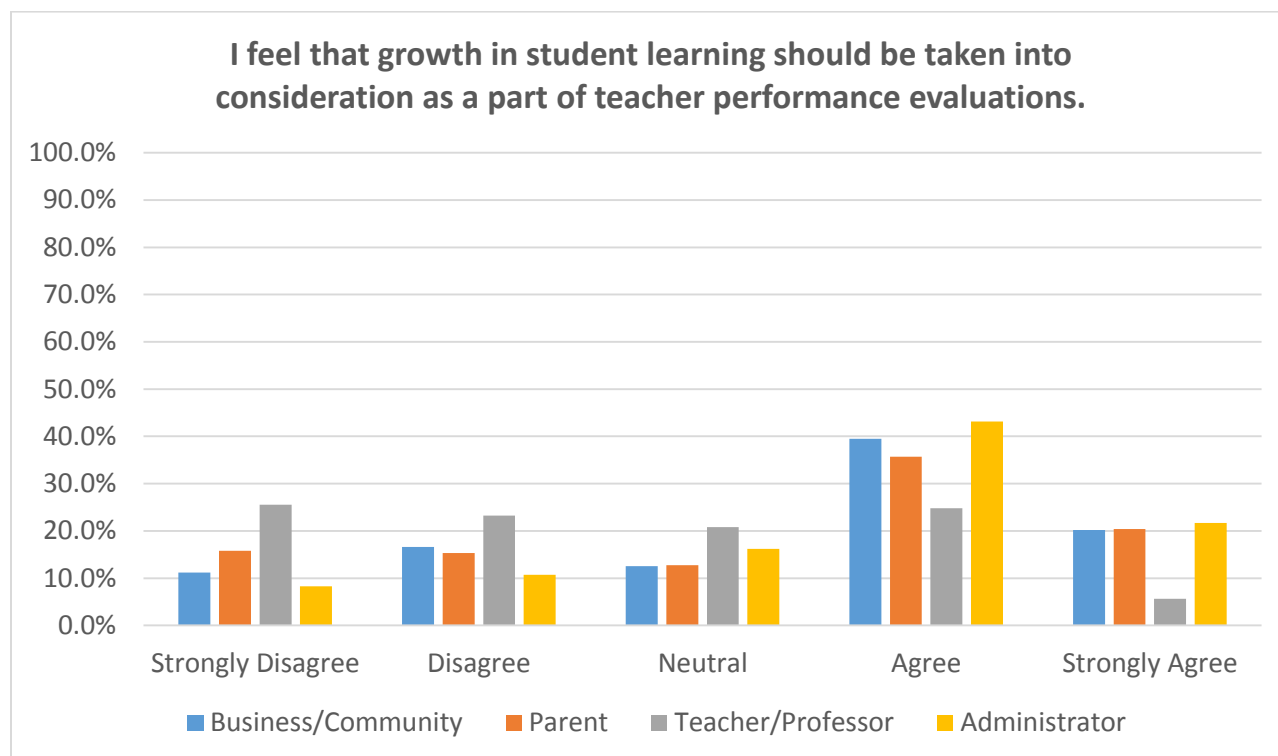
<sup>37</sup> Question was on a five point scale (Strongly Agree, Agree, Neutral, Disagree, Strongly Disagree). Percentages reflect responses “Agree” and “Strongly Agree”.

<sup>38</sup> Districts may be at different points in the adoption of a new educator performance evaluation system. All districts are required to have an updated system in place by fall 2016.

### Use of Student Growth

Participants across groups except for teachers agreed that growth in student learning should be taken into consideration as a part of teacher performance evaluations (Administrators 65%, Business 69%, Community 59%, Parent 56%, and Teacher 30%).<sup>39</sup>

**Figure 18: Stakeholder Agreement That Growth in Student Learning Should Be Taken into Consideration as Part of Teacher Performance Evaluations**



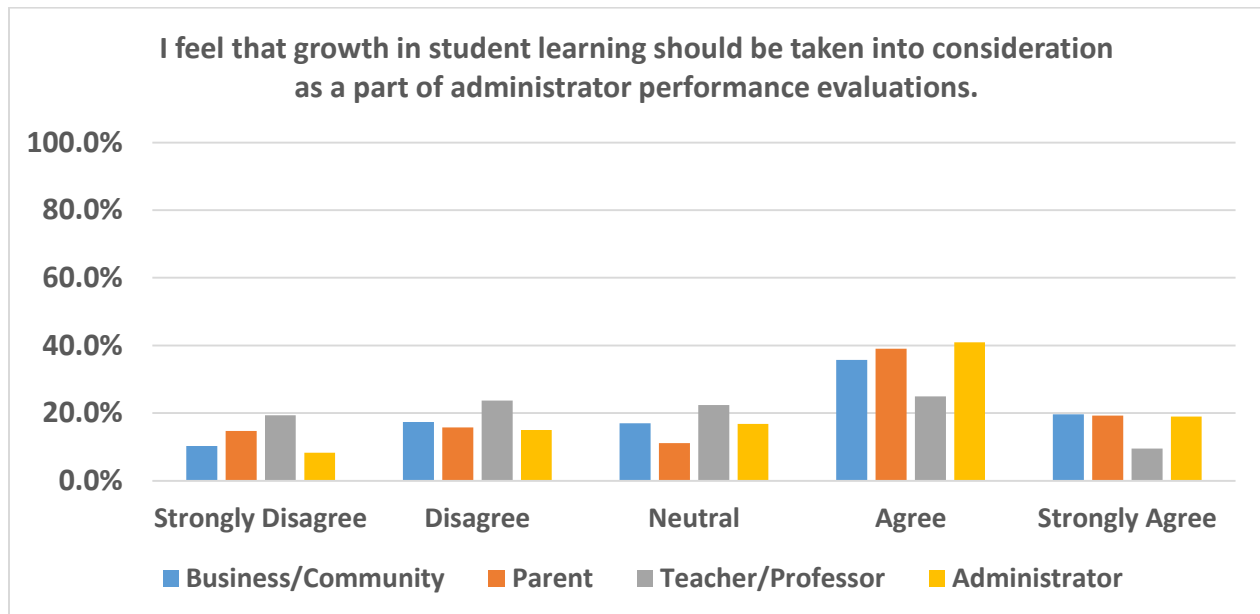
A majority of survey participants across stakeholder groups except for teachers agreed that growth in student learning should be taken into consideration as a part of administrator performance evaluations (Administrators 60%, Business 59%, Community 55%, Parent 58%, and Teachers 35%).<sup>40</sup>

<sup>39</sup> Question was on a five point scale (Strongly Agree, Agree, Neutral, Disagree, Strongly Disagree). Percentages reflect responses “Agree” and “Strongly Agree”.

<sup>40</sup> Question was on a five point scale (Strongly Agree, Agree, Neutral, Disagree, Strongly Disagree). Percentages reflect responses “Agree” and “Strongly Agree”.

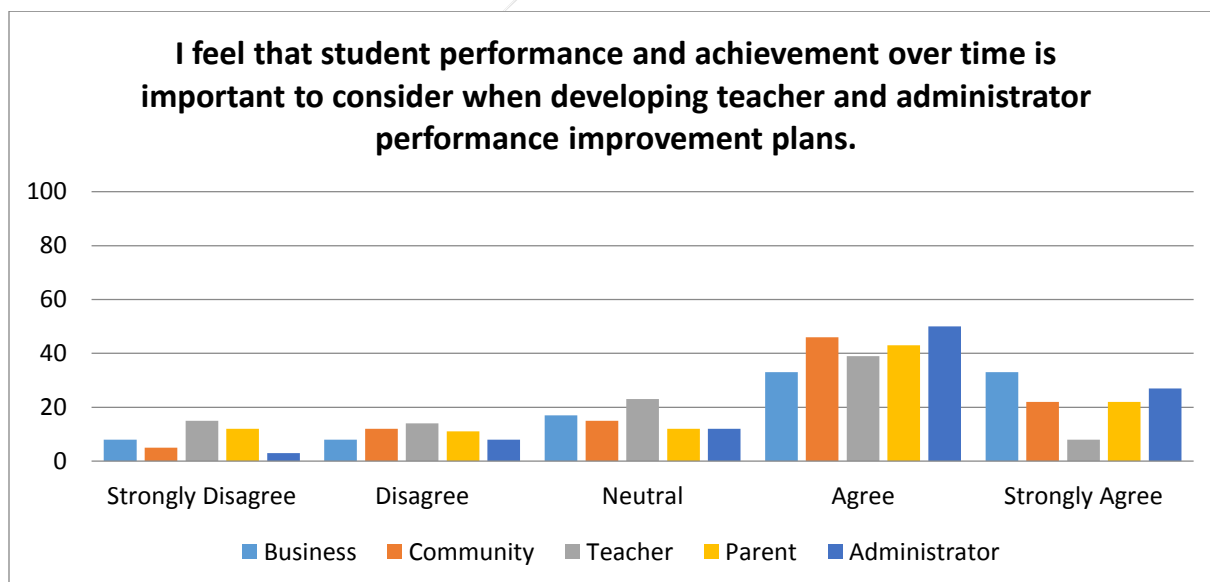


**Figure 19: Stakeholder Agreement That Growth in Student Learning Should Be Taken into Consideration as Part of Administrator Performance Evaluations**



A majority of all survey respondents across stakeholder groups agreed that it was important to consider student performance and achievement over time when developing teacher and administrator performance improvement plans (Administrators 77%, Business 66%, Parents 65%, and Teachers 48%).<sup>41</sup>

**Figure 20: Stakeholder Agreement That Student Performance and Achievement Over Time is Important to Consider when Developing Teacher and Administrator Performance Improvement Plans**



<sup>41</sup> Question was on a five point scale (Strongly Agree, Agree, Neutral, Disagree, Strongly Disagree). Percentages reflect responses “Agree” and “Strongly Agree”.

A majority of focus group participants also indicated that student growth was important to consider in understanding educator performance, so long as it was among other factors.

- *“The teacher is not the sole person responsible for their education, but that’s their job. So students’ learning should be reflected and if they’re not, then that should be taken into account too.” – Parent*
- *“Results are key, if students are growing there is a problem that needs to be addressed immediately.” – Parent*
- *“While the principal does not have direct impact in each classroom on student performance in the way that a teacher does, the principal has some responsibility for the performance of the staff under his/her supervision.” – Parent*

Concerns expressed about educator performance evaluations during focus groups and in open-ended response items were varied and included:

- Some factors are independent of a teacher or administrator control but have a significant impact on growth in student learning such as parent involvement, socioeconomic status, ability level, attendance, and disciplinary or behavioral issues.
  - *“Much like teachers, there are many factors not within a principal’s control.” – Teacher*
  - *“There are factors beyond a teacher’s control that impede student learning such as poor attendance, social-emotional challenges, and learning difficulties or disabilities.” – Teacher*
- Limitations of standardized tests to accurately and reliably measure growth in student learning and the importance of using multiple measures.
  - *“These assessments are short-snippets of a whole year’s worth of learning. They do not show the whole picture of a child’s growth.” – Teacher*
- PARCC assessment is new and it may be too soon to be reliably used as the basis for student growth.<sup>42</sup>
  - *“Without the appropriate computer training and lack of previous years of education for the new learning standards PARCC will not accurately assess student growth.” – Community Member*
  - *“There are still many gaps in instruction with the new standards which will be reflected on the PARCC.” – Parent*

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<sup>42</sup> PARCC had only been field tested at the time of the survey and the inaugural year of testing was in progress during most focus groups. Information on participation of study participants in field testing is not available.

## Observation and Training of Evaluators

Focus group participants expressed support for observation being among the factors that are taken into consideration as a part of educator evaluations but recognized the limitations as well.

Comments related to observations as a component of educator performance evaluations were varied and included:

- Observation is only snapshot of the classroom.
- Recognition of the importance of appropriate and consistent training for evaluators.
- Peer evaluators or independent evaluators might be considered in addition to or in place of administrator evaluations.

## Engagement with Families

During focus groups, regular communication with parents and being accessible were associated with a high quality teacher. Similarly, being enthusiastic, visible, and accessible to parents and community was seen as being a sign of a high quality principal.

- *“Feedback from the student, communication from the teacher, you know, those types of things. And even talking with them during teacher conferences or any of those informational nights, I feel like you can get a sense of how they are in class. Kind of the interaction that you get from them.” – Parent*
- *“I also think just behaviorally and attitudinally the principal really sets the tone for the school, so I think less about the academics or what they’re learning, the principal can really be a fun and enthusiastic presence that kind of rallies the troops, so I feel like the evaluation would have to be somewhere around that, versus someone who just hides in their office or is emotionally unavailable, you know.” – Parent*

## Collection & Use of Student and Teacher Information

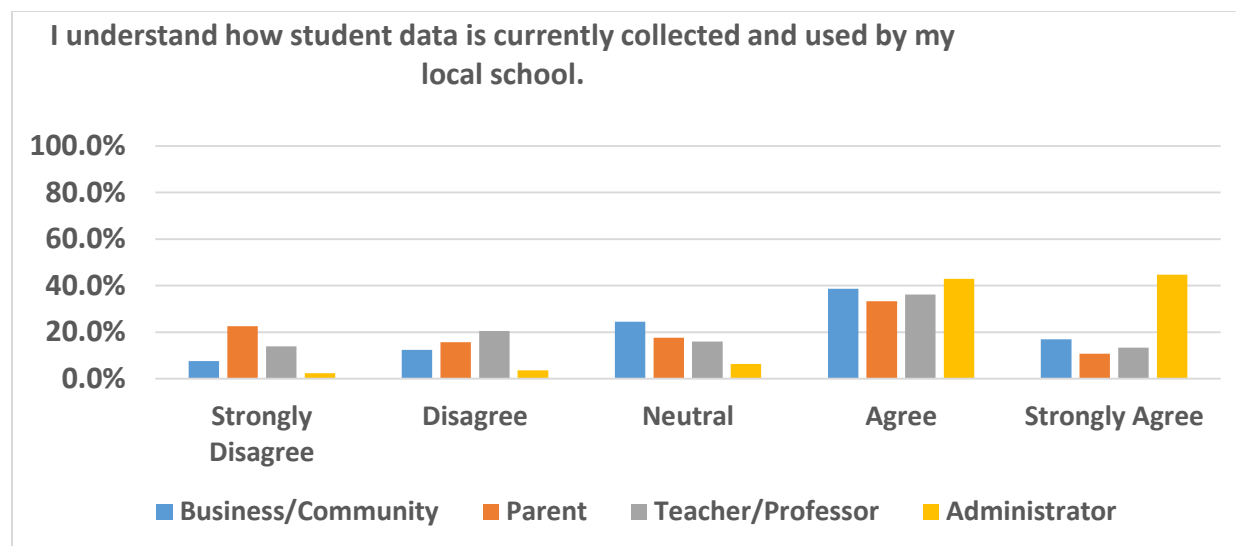
In 2009, the Illinois General Assembly passed the Illinois P20 Education Longitudinal Data System Act calling for the developing of a statewide longitudinal data system (LDS) which includes information about students and teachers. The system, when fully deployed, will provide data to help to track the outcomes of Illinois students as they progress from early childhood through postsecondary education, and as they enter the workforce. The LDS will provide data about student progress and programs that lawmakers and educators can use to inform their decisions about education policies and instruction.

## Familiarity

Among survey respondents, understanding of how student data is collected and used varied widely (Administrators 88%, Business 69%, Community 55%, Parents 44%, and Teachers

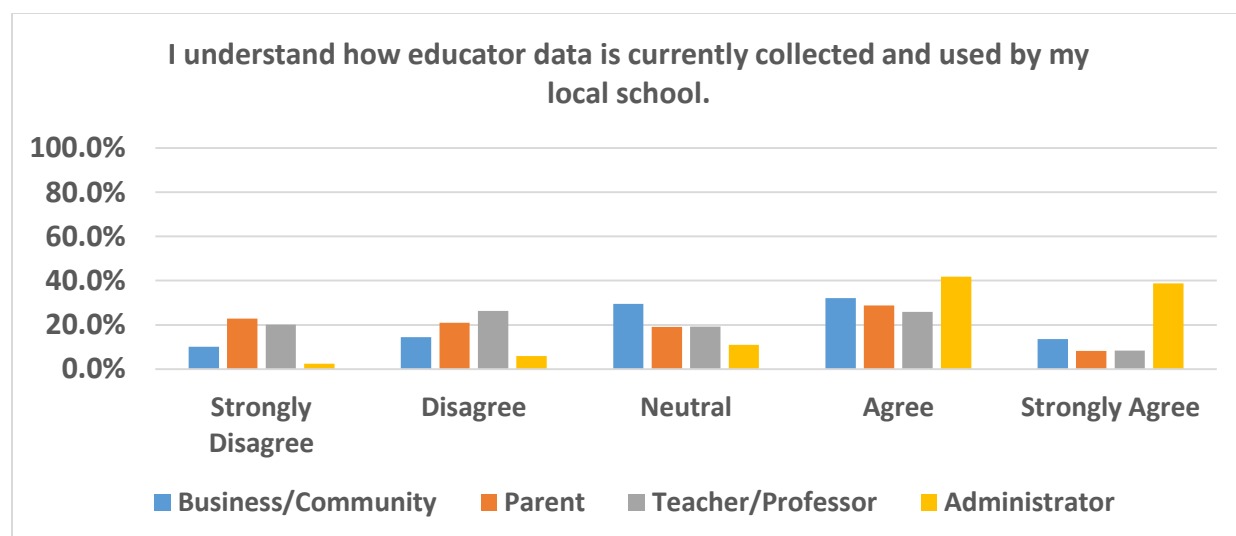
49%).<sup>43</sup> Administrators reported the highest levels of understanding. Levels of understanding about the collection and use of student data were higher than the levels of understanding about the collection and use of educator data across all stakeholder groups.

**Figure 21: Stakeholder Understanding of How Student Data Is Currently Collected and Used by Their Local School**



Among survey respondents, understanding of how educator data is collected and used varied widely (Administrators 81%, Business 50%, Community 46%, Parents 37%, and Teachers 34%).<sup>44</sup> Administrators reported the highest levels of understanding.

**Figure 22: Stakeholder Understanding of How Educator Data Is Currently Collected and Used by Their Local School**



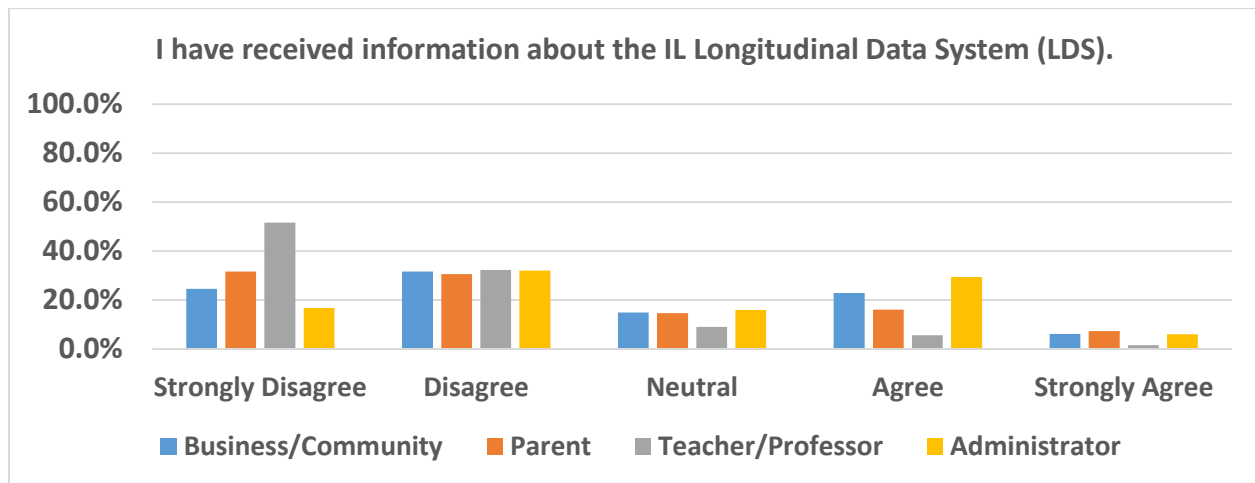
<sup>43</sup> Question was on a five point scale (Strongly Agree, Agree, Neutral, Disagree, Strongly Disagree). Percentages reflect responses “Agree” and “Strongly Agree”.

<sup>44</sup> Question was on a five point scale (Strongly Agree, Agree, Neutral, Disagree, Strongly Disagree). Percentages reflect responses “Agree” and “Strongly Agree”.

During focus groups, levels of understanding of how student and educator data is currently collected and used varied widely across stakeholder groups. Administrators and business representatives who participated in focus groups seemed to have the greatest awareness about types of longitudinal student data collected and its potential uses. Awareness and familiarity amongst teachers, community members, and parents was generally lower.

Survey participants across stakeholder groups reported low levels of having received information about the Illinois Longitudinal Data System (LDS) (Administrators 25%, Business 35%, Community 29%, Parents 23%, and Teachers – 7%).<sup>45</sup>

**Figure 23: Stakeholder Has Received Information About the LDS**



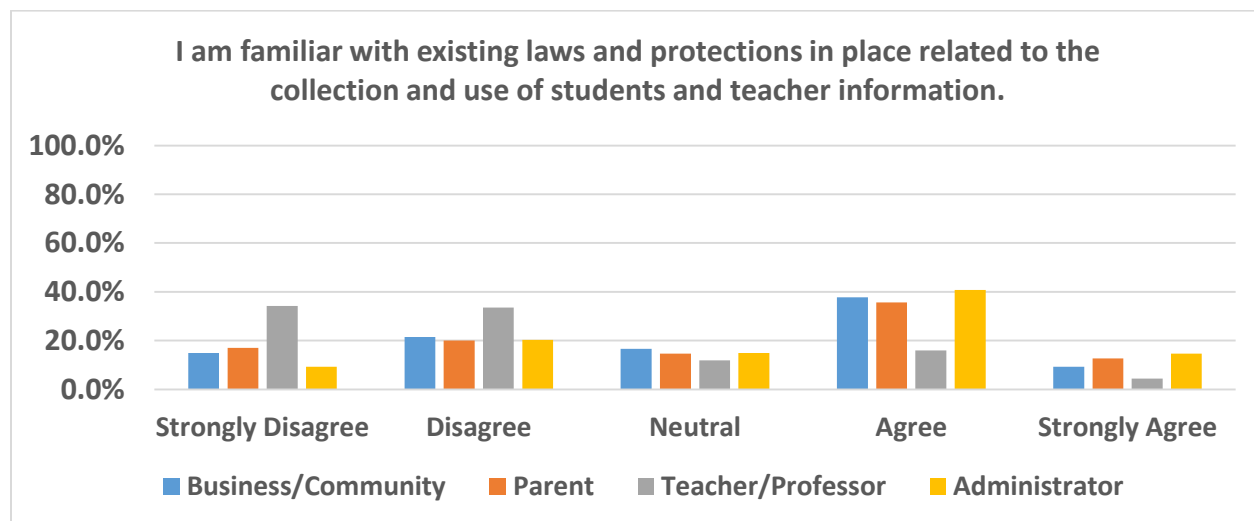
### Data Privacy and Security

Roughly half of survey respondents across stakeholder groups except teachers reported being familiar with existing laws and protections related to data collection and use (Administrators 55%, Business 50%, Community Members 47%, Parents 48%, and Teachers 20%).<sup>46</sup>

<sup>45</sup> Question was on a five point scale (Strongly Agree, Agree, Neutral, Disagree, Strongly Disagree). Percentages reflect responses “Agree” and “Strongly Agree”.

<sup>46</sup> Question was on a five point scale (Strongly Agree, Agree, Neutral, Disagree, Strongly Disagree). Percentages reflect responses “Agree” and “Strongly Agree”.

**Figure 24: Stakeholder Is Familiar with Laws and Protections in Place Related to Collection and Use of Student and Teacher Information**



Participants in focus groups referenced the importance of having appropriate regulation and policies in place to protect and preserve privacy and security. During focus groups, parents expressed interest in being able to learn more about current protections, such as types of data collected as well as access and use for each type. Parents suggested that providing this information during registration, on district or school websites, or through online portals would be the most convenient points of access.

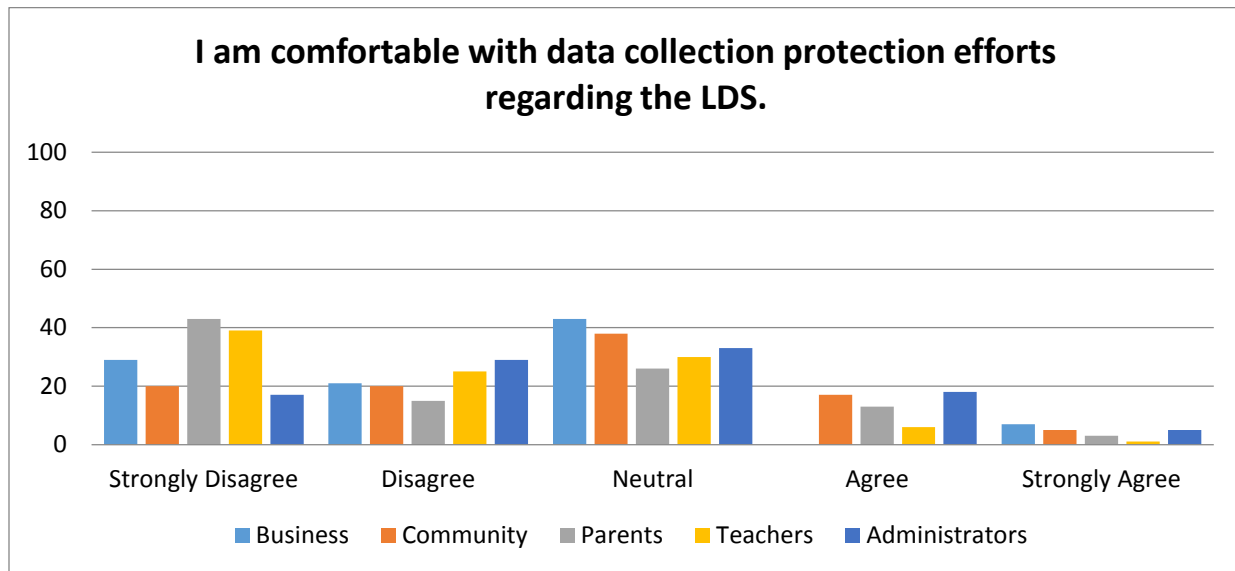
Comments and concerns expressed over data security and privacy were varied and included:

- Parents expressed concerns during focus groups about potential risks associated with tracking individual student data and access to student records.

Few survey respondents across stakeholder groups indicated they were not comfortable with existing laws and protections related to data collection and use (Administrators 23%, Business 7%, Community Members 22%, Parents 16%, and Teachers 7%).<sup>47</sup> A sizeable proportion of survey respondents across stakeholder groups responded “Neutral” (Administrators 33%, Business 43%, Community Members 38%, Parents 26%, and Teachers 30%).

<sup>47</sup> Question was on a five point scale (Strongly Agree, Agree, Neutral, Disagree, Strongly Disagree). Percentages reflect responses “Agree” and “Strongly Agree”.

**Figure 25: Stakeholder Is Comfortable with Data Collection Protection Efforts Regarding the LDS**



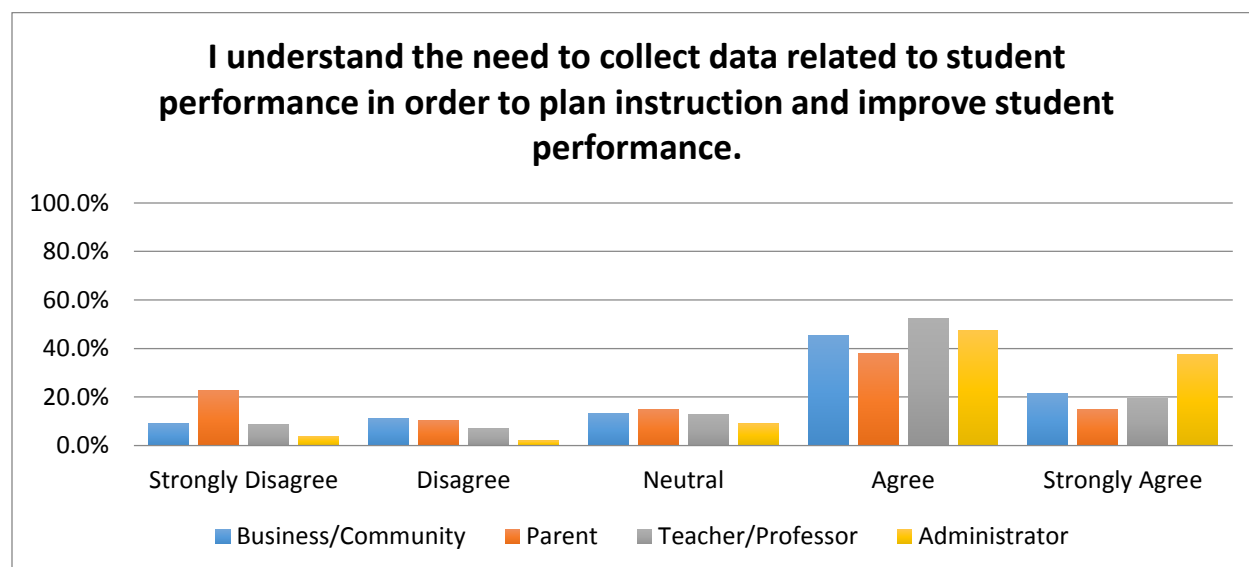
In 2014, Public Act 98-707 was signed into law amending the Children's Privacy Protection and Parental Empowerment Act to include updated provisions related to parental consent. The law went into effect January 1, 2015. The survey was conducted between November 2014 and January 2015. Increased awareness of the provisions included in this legislation may help address concerns related to student data privacy and security.

### **Purpose and Utility of Longitudinal Data**

A majority of survey respondents across stakeholder groups reported understanding the need to collect data related to student performance to help plan instruction and improve student performance (Administrators 85%, Business 65%, Community 68%, Parents 53%, and Teachers 72%).<sup>48</sup>

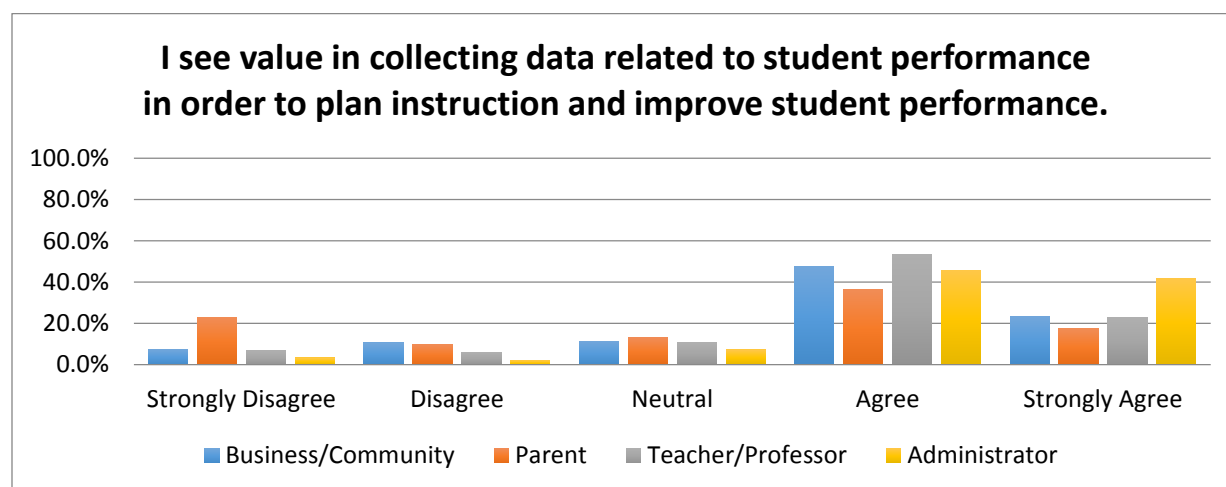
<sup>48</sup> Question was on a five point scale (Strongly Agree, Agree, Neutral, Disagree, Strongly Disagree). Percentages reflect responses "Agree" and "Strongly Agree".

**Figure 26: Stakeholder Understands the Need to Collect Data Related to Student Performance in Order to Plan Instruction and Improve Student Performance**



A majority of survey respondents across stakeholder groups reported seeing value in collecting data related to student performance to help plan instruction and improve student performance (Administrators 88%, Business 58%, Community 72%, Parents 54%, and Teachers 77%).<sup>49</sup>

**Figure 27: Stakeholder Sees Value in Collecting Data Related to Student Performance in Order to Plan Instruction and Improve Student Performance**



During focus group discussions, administrators, business representatives, and community service providers<sup>50</sup> were favorable to the use of longitudinal data and cross-sector sharing of aggregate data, particularly at the local/regional level.

<sup>49</sup> Question was on a five point scale (Strongly Agree, Agree, Neutral, Disagree, Strongly Disagree). Percentages reflect responses “Agree” and “Strongly Agree”.

<sup>50</sup> Community service providers were a sub-group within community member focus groups.



Focus group participants who were favorable to collecting, linking, and sharing data cited improved capacity for planning and coordination service as reason for support.

- Interoperability of systems was cited as a common frustration related to the use of cross-systems and longitudinal data.
- Business community indicated they saw value in having longitudinal data to better understand trends and gaps between education and the workforce.
- Administrators indicated they saw value in having longitudinal data to better understand secondary to post-secondary education transitions and education to employment pipeline.

### **COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATIONS**

The following takeaways and recommendations were developed by the Committee after receiving the findings and themes of this study. These draft recommendations were presented to the P-20 Council for consideration on July 22, 2015. These draft recommendations can be found as a separate attachment in the appendix as well.

Overarching takeaways based on feedback from survey and focus groups participants include:

- Some factors are independent of direct teacher or administrator control but have a significant impact on student learning and educator impact. Such factors include parent involvement, socioeconomic status, attendance, other student characteristics, as well as disciplinary or behavioral issues
- Regular contact and communication with parents is essential.
- Consideration for all education policy discussions need to reflect that all students including college bound and workforce bound students receive life preparations skills to meet the need to become productive and successful citizens.
- Due to the timing of the survey and focus groups, data on PARCC must be considered in the context of the pre-test administration period.

What follows are specific recommendations put forward by the Implementation Review Committee which were developed based on the findings and themes of this evaluation study.

### **Student Learning Standards**

1. Provide additional planning time and professional development for implementation. Stakeholders reported that the three biggest challenges to implementation of the IL Learning standards are: sufficient planning time (74% administrators, 77% teachers), professional development (69% administrators, 67% teachers), and lack of time due to multiple initiatives (67% administrators, 60% teachers).

2. Encourage further engagement of families and communities. Nearly half of parents who responded to the survey indicated they were aware of how to access resources to support student learning and mastery of the new Illinois Learning Standards. Additional parent training, including, homework help, will enhance student learning.
3. Develop methods of generating a better understanding of the distribution of career and technical education (CTE) offerings across the state, including an understanding of the role of community colleges to provide CTE. Parents reported a perceived reduction in the number of CTE offerings. Career and technical education opportunities could provide hands-on experience to develop workforce and life skills.

### **Statewide Student Assessments**

4. Given the critical role that assessment plays in a strong educational system, consider input on the overall use of assessment and the resulting data to ensure that high quality, timely feedback is provided to assist all stakeholders in understanding what kids know and are able to do as measured against the new Illinois Standards. As part of this work, continue to monitor and assess the amount of time both in preparation for and in assessment.
5. Support continued research and data collection to determine PARCC's ability to predict college and career readiness and assess student growth as Illinois continues to consider PARCC as a replacement for the ACT as a college entrance examination. Additional research may be needed to ensure effective monitoring of achievement for all students, including for special populations.
6. Provide all students with appropriate training and access to ensure readiness for computer based assessment. Additional attention should be given to challenges and difficulties of students with special needs, early childhood, and English Language Learners. The majority of stakeholders did not consider themselves to be familiar with modifications and accommodations for special education students or English Language Learners.
7. Use multiple measures in addition to standardized assessments as the basis of data for decision making and defining proficiency. Concerns about narrowing all judgments of schools, students, teachers, and principals on assessment were noted by all classes of respondents.

### **Educator Performance Evaluations**

8. Continue to provide appropriate, consistent, and ongoing training for evaluators.
9. Use multiple measures to evaluate educators' performance including student growth and observation data throughout the evaluation cycle.

### **Longitudinal Data System**

10. Evaluate current data privacy protections to better understand and communicate about regulations and protections currently in place.
11. Provide resources to inform parents, educators and communities on the use of the longitudinal data system, how data is accessed, what data are collected, current legislative efforts related to data privacy, and how and with whom data is shared.